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The Blacksmith Outlaw: OR, MERRY ENGLAND.

BY HARRISON AINSWORTH.

CHAPTER I.

THE SMITH, THE FRIAR, AND THE OUTLAW.

AT the pleasant village of Dartford, in Kent, in 1381, and in the fifth of Richard II, there dwelt a smith named Wat Tyler.

Somewhat above the middle height, and very powerfully built, he had a broad, manly visage, characterized by a stern expression, and his deep-set eyes possessed a latent fire very easily kindled. His dark locks were clipped close to his head, so as to reveal a massive brow, but his beard was bushy and overgrown.

The smith's ordinary apparel was well calculated to display his stalwart frame, and consisted of a coarse, brown serge tunic, with skirts reaching below the girdle, long russet hose, and sandals fastened with thongs.

When he went forth, he put on a hood that covered his head, neck, and shoulders, and only left the face visible. Attached to his girdle were a pouch and a dagger, the latter being of his own manufacture.

It was a sight to see the lusty smith in his leather apron, with his brawny arms bared to the shoulder, making the sparks fly as he beat the glowing iron on the anvil. When surrounded by his men, most of whom were built on his own robust model, he looked like Vulcan amid the Cyclops.

Wat Tyler was in the prime of manhood, not being more than forty. He was married, and had one child, a daughter, whom he loved as the apple of his eye. Rough with all others, he was ever gentle to her.

He had not always been a smith. In his younger days he was an archer, and drew as strong a bow as a Sherwood forester. A vassal of Sir Eustace de Valletort, he formed part of the train of that noble knight, and accompanied his lord to the wars in France and Bretagne. In some rude encounters with the enemy, he had the good fortune to attract the notice both of the Black Prince and the Duke of Lancaster. Severely wounded at the siege of Rennes, he was left for dead, but recovered, and eventually returned with Sir Eustace to England.

At this period all the peasants were serfs, being unable to abandon the small portion of land which they cultivated or quit the service of their lords, who could compel them to follow them to the wars, or sell them with their habitations, their implements of labor, and their families. In short, the villeins, as they were termed, were in the same wretched state of bondage that they had been after the conquest; freedom being rarely granted save on payment of a heavy fine.

When Wat Tyler went to the wars, he was a bondman, but on his return, in consideration of his good service, he was emancipated by his lord, and enabled to establish himself as a smith at his native village of Dartford. Being skillful at his work, he found plenty of employment; and it was said that he could make a stronger breast-plate and a better skull-cap than any armorer in Kent.

But though he had little reason to complain, Wat was a discontented man. Of late, he had become more sullen than heretofore, and seemed brooding over some secret wrong. Could we penetrate the inmost recesses of his breast, we should find it occupied by fierce and turbulent thoughts, by intense

hatred of the noble and the rich, by a burning desire of vengeance upon the oppressors of the people, and by a fixed determination to divide all property among the lower classes, should the great revolt of the commonalty, which he felt assured would speedily take place, be crowned with success.

Ever since the accession of Richard II. to the throne, in 1377, strong symptoms of popular agitation had been manifest, though they had been disregarded by the nobles, who felt secure of their power; but now the storm, that had so long been brewing, seemed likely to burst, and with extraordinary fury.

The youthful monarch, who was now only in his sixteenth year, was governed by his uncles, the Duke of Lancaster and the Earls of Cambridge and Buckingham, subsequently created Dukes of Cambridge and Gloucester, and their exactions and severity had exasperated the people almost beyond endurance.



"BACK, ON THY LIFE!" CRIED RICHARD, DRAWING HIS SWORD, AS HIS BROTHER ADVANCED.

Moreover, Richard had several rapacious favorites, the chief among them being his two half-brothers, the Earl of Kent and Sir John Holland, Sir Simon Burley, the Earls of Salisbury, Warwick, and Suffolk, and Sir Richard le Scrope, steward of the household; and these helped to drain the royal exchequer, which needed constant replenishment.

Added to all, in consequence of the continual and fruitless wars with France, the expenses of the nobles and knights, who vied with each other in the number and splendor of their trains, were excessive, and could only be maintained by repeated exactions from the serfs.

At length, the miserable peasants determined to throw off the yoke under which they labored. Secret meetings took place among them in several parts of Kent and Essex, and a great league of the commons was formed for the purpose of compelling the nobles, knights and gentlemen to renounce the privileges they had so shamefully abused.

A mysterious mode of communication was devised, by means of which the members of the association could correspond with each other without danger of discovery.

The chief contriver of this extensive and dangerous conspiracy was Wat Tyler, who aspired to be the leader of the insurrection, and, from his daring and resolute character, he seemed well fitted for the post.

One of Wat Tyler's confederates in the revolutionary scheme, and who lent the seditious smith great aid, was a Franciscan friar, named John Ball, a professed disciple of the great religious reformer, John Wycliffe, whose doctrines were then extremely popular.

Clad in his gray gown, and girded with a cord, the barefooted friar went from village to village throughout Kent, preaching equality, the necessity of a general partition of property, and the abolition of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

"My good friends," he said to the peasants who collected to hear him, "things cannot go on well in England, nor ever will, until everything shall be in common; when there shall neither be vassal nor lord, and all distinctions leveled; when the lords shall be no more masters than ourselves. How ill have they used us! and for what reason do they hold us in bondage? Are we not all descended from the same parents, Adam and Eve? And what can they show and what reason give, why they should be more the masters than we ourselves? They are clothed in velvet and rich stuffs, ornamented with ermine and other furs, while we are forced to wear poor cloth. They have wine, spices, and fine bread when we have only rye, and water to drink. We are called slaves, and if we do not perform our services we are beaten. Let us go to the King, who is young, and remonstrate with him on our servitude, telling him we must have it otherwise, or we shall find a remedy for it ourselves."

Inflammatory preaching like this, addressed to an ignorant peasantry, half maddened by the cruelty and injustice with which they were treated, could not fail to produce the effect intended.

All who listened to the factious monk resolved to shake off their chains, and be free.

Not content with haranguing the peasants, John Ball sent a letter secretly to the head man in each village, couched in the following terms;

"John Ball greets you well;
Soon you will hear the signal bell,
When it sounds, rise suddenly;
And, as you would for men be,
Hold together steadfastly,
In brotherhood and unity.
Nothing fear,
The end is near—
The end you hope for—Liberty."

John Ball's proceedings, not being conducted with sufficient caution, came to the knowledge of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who caused him to be arrested.

The Archbishop looked upon him as a half-crazed enthusiast, affected by the heresies of Wycliffe, but had no idea of the mischief he was doing, or he would have put him to death. As it was, he imprisoned him in the barbican of the old castle of Canterbury, destroyed by Louis of France in the time of King John.

Another important member of the league, but of a very different stamp from the friar, was an outlaw and captain of robbers, whose real name was Guibald le Maudit, though he had assumed the appellation of Jack Straw.

Having been guilty of a trespass on a royal forest in the reign of Edward III, in other words, of killing deer, a heinous offense in those days, and punishable with

leath—Guibald fled to avoid the consequences of his act, and, since he could not be captured, he was outlawed, and a price set on his head.

He was soon joined by several marauders, fugitives from justice like himself; and, being superior to the rest of his lawless companions, was chosen as their leader; and a very determined leader he proved, and enforced the strictest obedience to his commands.

Jack Straw and his band speedily became the terror of all travelers in Kent; and, to avoid being plundered, the numerous pilgrims to the shrine of St. Thomas a Becket, at Canterbury, were obliged to be guarded by an escort.

But the robber chief modeled his conduct on that of another renowned outlaw, Robin Hood; and while he despoiled the rich without scruple, he gave very liberally to the poor. Hence he had always spies to tell him of the approach of a party of travelers, or to warn him of danger; and though his retreat was well known, it was never discovered by the officers of justice.

For seven years Jack Straw had now been master of the road between Blackheath and Canterbury, and made every traveler he could lay hands upon pay toll.

Almost as soon as an insurrection of the Kentish peasants was planned, Jack Straw heard of the plot, and immediately sent a faithful messenger to Wat Tyler, offering to join the league, and engaging to bring his followers with him.

The proposal was eagerly accepted; and shortly afterwards a secret meeting took place between the smith and the outlaw, who were well pleased with each other.

Their feelings were in common. They both hated the nobility, and burnt to avenge the wrongs inflicted on the serfs. Both desired to level all distinctions of rank, and partition all property among the people. And this was singular in the case of Guibald le Mau-duit; for, though an outcast, he really belonged to a noble family.

Before separating, each confederate drew his dagger, pierced his left arm, and, as blood flowed from the puncture, they vowed eternal fidelity to each other.

Guibald le Mau-duit, or Jack Straw, as we shall henceforth style him, was some ten years younger than the burly smith. Tall and well proportioned, he had a spare but sinewy frame, and was exceedingly active, being so swift of foot that he could keep up with a horse at full gallop. More than once he had owed his safety to his remarkable fleetness.

Jack Straw was by no means ill favored, but his countenance had a sinister expression. His complexion was excessively swarthy—so swarthy as to suggest that the skin must be stained by walnut juice.

Be this as it may, his dark visage, lighted up by a pair of fiercely-flashing eyes, was calculated to inspire terror. His raven locks hung down in disorder, and a shaggy beard, of the same hue, clothed his chin.

The daring outlaw usually rode a powerful black charger, taken from the Sire de Gommegines, as that baron was on his way to visit the young king at the Palace of Shene; and all his men were well mounted, for they found no difficulty in providing themselves with steeds. They were, likewise, well armed; some with cross-bows, some with long-bows.

Their leader wore a doublet of Kendal green, with a horn slung over his shoulders by a green baldric; and on his head was a small cap, with a heron's feather stuck in it. Boots of supple leather, fitting close to the leg, and ascending above the knee, completed his picturesque costume. He was armed with a broad-bladed sword and poinard, and a small battle-ax was affixed to his saddle.

Appended to his neck by a slender chain, but entirely concealed by his jerkin, was a small silver case, containing a single straw, brought from the dungeon of St. Peter, at Rome. From this straw, which he devoutly believed would shield him from a violent death, the outlaw took his name.

When John Ball was arrested by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Jack Straw found means of communicating with him in his prison, and undertook to deliver him; but the friar bade him not trouble himself about him, saying that his work was done, and that it would be time enough to set him free when the general rising took place.

It was clear that the outbreak could not long be delayed, for the ferment among the people had been heightened by another most obnoxious measure.

A poll-tax of three groats was imposed upon every person, male and female, throughout the kingdom, above fifteen years of age; and as it was foreseen that there would be great difficulty in collecting this tax, it was farmed to a rich company of Lombard merchants, then resident in the city of London.

As might be expected, these merchants proceeded most rigorously; and employed the roughest collectors they could find, enjoining them to let none escape who were liable to the tax.

The collectors set about their task with zeal; and everywhere complaints arose from the people of the brutal usage they experienced from them.

Wat Tyler heard of these murmurs with secret satisfaction. The more the peasants were exasperated, the better it served his purpose.

As yet no collector of the poll-tax had visited Dartford; but its turn would soon come, and then a disturbance might be expected.

CHAPTER II.

EDITHA.

EDITHA, the smith's daughter, was now verging upon fifteen, and, though her charms were not fully developed, she gave promise of remarkable beauty.

Her lineaments were delicately moulded; her eyes blue and limpid, and arched over by dark, penciled brows; while her tresses were light and fleecy.

She had neither the look nor the manner of a rustic

maiden; nor did she bear any personal resemblance to either of her parents. But it will not be wondered at that her manner should be superior to her condition, when we mention that she had been most carefully instructed by the prioress of St. Mary and St. Margaret, who took especial interest in her.

So much effect had the good prioress's teaching and discourses produced upon the smith's daughter, that the villagers declared that she would end by becoming a nun.

Dame Tyler was three or four years younger than her husband, and still comely. She was rather inclined to gossip with her neighbors; and so little reliance had Wat Tyler in her discretion, that he kept her in complete ignorance of the plot he was engaged in.

On Whit-Monday morn, in the year previously mentioned—and a most lovely morn it was—a young damsel issued from the Priory gate, and took her way beneath the trees towards the village.

Her footstep was as light as that of a fawn; and as she tripped along the path, ever and anon pausing to listen to the caroling of the birds, a smile of happiness played upon her charming countenance.

No fairer creature was abroad on that delightful morning than this young damsel. As some old folks who watched her thought, she was an object to gladden the eye.

Her simple attire suited her well. She wore a hood and wimple. Her kirtle was of scarlet sendall, but not too long to hide her small laced buskins. From the girdle that spanned her slender waist hung a rosary of red beads; and she was likewise provided with an aumoniére, or silken purse, which had been given her by Prioress Isabel. In her hand she carried a mass-book.

As she moved on, she met several village maidens, most of them a few years older than herself, but none one-half so fair.

All of them greeted her, and some stopped for a moment to exchange a few words with her.

"Give you good-morrow, gentle Editha!" cried one of these maidens, a comely damsel of nineteen, with a ripe cherry lip and eyes black as a sloe, who was carrying a pail of milk to the Priory. "You will come to the sports this afternoon, I hope? All the lads of the village will be on the green. They are now dressing the May-pole with garlands and flowers, and a band of minstrels from Rochester arrived last night at the 'Bull.' There will be dancing and mumming, and no lack of cakes and Whitsun ale."

Thus spoke Marjory, the milk-maid, a damsel who had many admirers; and she ended by a loud laugh, that displayed her white teeth.

But Editha replied, rather gravely, "The Lady Prioress has given me permission to view the sports, so I shall come to the green with my mother; but I don't think I shall take any part in them."

"Ah, you'll change your mind when you hear the merry sound of the tabor and pipe!" said Marjory, again laughing.

"I scarcely think so," replied Editha. "I'm sure the Lady Prioress wouldn't approve of my dancing."

"She won't inflict a very severe penance upon you," returned Marjory; "and if you mean to take the vow, I would advise you to enjoy yourself while you can."

"I have no intention of becoming a nun," rejoined Editha. "But I won't do anything to incur Lady Isabel's displeasure."

"No wonder you're such a favorite with her!" cried Marjory, rather spitefully.

And she went off with her pail.

As Editha pursued her way homewards she had to pass the green, in the midst of which stood the May-pole.

Already adorned with garlands and ropes of flowers, as Marjory, the milk-maid, had stated, it looked very pretty; and as she stopped for a moment to gaze at it, several young rustics hastened towards her; but she started off again instantly, and left them.

From the aspect of the usually quiet village, any one might have known it was a *Fete* day. The church bells were ringing joyous peals, and other enlivening sounds were heard.

Preparations for merry-making and festivity at a later hour seemed to be going on at many of the picturesque habitations that formed the long, straggling street leading to the wooden bridge across the silver Darent.

The chief hostel in the village bore the sign of the "Bull," as does the large, comfortable inn that has succeeded it. In front of the "Bull," stood the little band of minstrels of whom the milkmaid had spoken.

Tall, strong-looking fellows, not much like ordinary minstrels, they were provided with cornet, tabor, and fife. Though urged to play by the crowd collected around, they declined to do so till the sports began.

Like the rest of the villagers, Wat Tyler seemed disposed to give himself a holiday. He did not put out the fire of his forge; but left his men in charge of the smithy, in case they should be called upon to shoe a horse, or do some other work that could not be delayed.

Having put on his hood and tunic, he was preparing to sally forth, when he met his daughter at the door.

"Are you going out for a walk, father?" she asked.

"If so, pray take me with you."

"I am going to Dartford Brent," he replied. "You had better go in to your mother."

But Editha would not be denied.

"That is just the walk I should like," she said. "I want to gather some wild thyme on the downs, and the morning is charming. I must go."

The smith would rather have been without her, but he could not resist her look, and they went on together. Many an eye followed them as they walked along; and not a few of the beholders were struck by the contrast offered by Wat's burly frame to the slight and graceful figure of his daughter.

In the market-place there were a few women with baskets, containing eggs, butter, and honey; and others with pigeons, ducks, goslings, and freshly-caught trout, for which the Darent was renowned, and they all

gathered around the smith; but he made no purchases.

When he drew near the "Bull," one of the minstrels we have described, made a sign, and having caught Wat's eye, pointed towards the eastern downs.

The smith nodded his head, to signify that he understood what was meant, and marched on with his daughter.

They were now in St. Edmund's Way, so called from the chantry of St. Edmund Martyr, which stood there. Of such peculiar sanctity was this ancient chapel, that it was always visited by the pilgrims to Canterbury. The priests were now saying mass in the chantry, and Editha would fain have had her father enter, and join them in their devotions, but he heeded not her request.

A little further on was the church, and here again mass was being celebrated. Once more Wat turned a deaf ear to his daughter's entreaties to him to go in, and hastened to cross the wooden bridge over the Darent. Leaning for a moment over the rails, he saw the trout darting past beneath, and pointed them out to Editha.

They now began to climb the steep side of the hill, which was overgrown with juniper, and when they gained the brow of the eminence a lovely prospect burst upon them.

Both, of course, were familiar with the view, yet they regarded it with as much delight as if they beheld it for the first time. The bright sunshine that lighted up the picture enhanced its beauty.

In the midst of a wide valley, watered by the silver Darent, and by another clear trout stream, called the Cray, and bounded on either side by a range of downs, lay the pretty and picturesque village of Dartford.

Even then, it was not a very small village, and boasted, as we have shown, a church, a priory, and a chantry, the two latter being in great repute.

Indeed, Lady Isabel, the Prioress of St. Mary's, of whom we have already spoken, and several of the nuns, belonged to noble families.

The priory which had only been founded some five-and-twenty years before the date of our story by Edward III, was a large pile, built of brick, situated at the foot of a softly-sloping hill at the northwest of the village. In the wood near the priory was a hermitage.

Almost immediately beneath those who gazed upon the prospect were the chantry and the church, with the Darent flowing on through the valley, till it was joined by the Cray, when their combined waters formed a creek, deep enough to serve as a harbor for small vessels trading with London.

Watermills there were on both streams; but paper-mills and powdermills were, of course, unknown.

At a short distance beyond the creek we have just described could be seen the Thames; the woody heights on the opposite shore belonged to Essex.

On the left the view was circumscribed by a number of hills, most of them covered with woods, amidst which, here and there could be distinguished the turrets and castellated walls of some Norman mansion.

At that early period the original aspect of the country was almost unchanged. Much land was uncultivated, and not even cleared; vast tracts being still covered by primeval forests.

Beyond the down on which Wat Tyler and his daughter stood, contemplating the lovely scene we have attempted to describe, stretched a flat, heathy plain, called Dartford Brent.

It was skirted on the right by a thick wood, which was thought to harbor robbers; for several travelers journeying by that road to Rochester, or coming thence to Dartford, had been plundered of late.

Editha was somewhat surprised, therefore, when her father told her he was going on to a short distance by himself, and bade her sit down on the turf, and read her mass-book till his return.

Without waiting for an answer, he set off at a quick pace in the direction of the wood; but he had not got far when a band of armed men issued from the thicket, and rode towards him.

From the wild appearance of these men, who were about a dozen in number, Editha could not doubt they were robbers; but it was evident her father had no cause for apprehension, for the leader of the band, who was mounted on a powerful black horse, signed to his followers to halt, and galloping up to the smith, greeted him in a very friendly manner.

Editha was confounded at the sight.

She was reluctant to believe that her father would hold any intercourse with the captain of a band of robbers; yet there he was, standing close to the suspicious-looking horseman, and conversing amicably with him.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE INTERVIEW ON DARTFORD BRENT.

JACK STRAW—for it was he whom Editha beheld conversing with her father—was urgent that the signal for revolt should be given.

"I cannot see what is to be gained by further delay," he said to the smith. "Everywhere the people are ready to rise, and as soon as the standard of rebellion is raised, thousands will join it. In Essex there has already been an outbreak. Two of my emissaries have just returned from Brentwood, with the news that the men of Fobbing have put to flight the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, and have slain the jurymen and clerks, and stuck their heads on poles. The whole country will soon be in a flame."

"This occurred at Fobbing, you say?" remarked Wat Tyler.

"Only yesterday," replied the outlaw. "Thomas de Bampton, the tax commissioner, has been holding a court of taxation at Brentwood; but the men of Fobbing refused to attend him, and the Chief Justice came down to punish them. But they have punished him. Shall we not follow their example?"

"They have had a pretext, which we want," observed the smith.

"But the opportunity ought not to be neglected," pursued the outlaw. "The King's three uncles are absent. John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, who governs in his youthful nephew's name, and whom we have most reason to dread, is at Roxburgh, seeking to make a truce with the Scots. He cannot return. Then the Earl of Cambridge is at Plymouth, preparing to sail to Lisbon, with five hundred men at arms, and five hundred archers, to aid the King of Portugal against the King of Castile. The Earl of Buckingham is in Wales. Not one of the three is likely to interfere with us."

"There is no one to resist us, unless it be the King's half-brother, the Earl of Kent," observed Wat Tyler; "and he will not be able to raise an army, for the nobles hate him, and will not serve under him."

"Our march to London will be almost unopposed," said the outlaw; "and when we arrive there, the citizens will open their gates, and give us a hearty welcome."

"Nay, of a surety, we shall have the Lord Mayor, William Walworth, against us," said Wat Tyler. "Moreover, Sir John Philpot, who levied war on his own account, and got reprimanded by the council for his pains, will stand by the King. That we shall be masters of London in the end, I nothing doubt; but we must dispose of Walworth and Philpot, and many others, before we shall be secure. You ask me why I hesitate to give the signal for the insurrection when all is ready, and the moment seems propitious. I have delayed because the poll tax is goading the people to madness, as this outbreak in Essex proves, and I want them to be thoroughly roused. They will not then turn back. Besides, we have a duty to perform. We must be true to our friends. Before the rising in this country takes place, John Ball must be delivered from prison, or he will be put to death by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Were that to happen, it would be an eternal reproach to us, since he is the chief contriver of the plot."

"The barbacan in which he is confined is strongly guarded, or I should have already liberated him," rejoined Jack Straw. "But I will make another attempt."

"His deliverance will be best accomplished by stratagem," remarked Wat Tyler. "As I came hither, I noticed that some of your band are in the village, disguised as minstrels."

"I thought you might want assistance in the event of some sudden emergency, so I sent Hugo Morcar and three others to attend your orders. You will have a grand company of pilgrims in Dartford to-day."

"And you mean to wait for them here—ha?" cried Wat Tyler.

"No," replied the outlaw; "I shall not attack them. 'Tis the Princess of Wales—the King's mother—who is making a pilgrimage to Canterbury. She will be attended by all her ladies, and escorted by her second son, Sir John Holland, and a large retinue of nobles and knights."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Wat Tyler. "Could you not follow the train to Canterbury! Perchance you might find some means of liberating John Ball."

"I will think the matter over," replied the outlaw. "The attempt will be fraught with danger, but I care not for that. If aught should occur to you, send a message to me by Morcar. He will know where to find me."

"Good!" said the smith. "Know you at what hour the Princess of Wales may be expected at Dartford?"

"Early in the day," rejoined the other. "She purposes reaching Canterbury to-night."

"You are well informed."

"Ay; few persons travel by this road without my hearing of them. The Princess rested yesterday at the palace at Eltham, and meant to start on her pilgrimage to-morrow. On arriving at Dartford, she will visit the Lady Isabel at the priory, and pay her devotions at the chantry of Edmund the Martyr."

"You know more than the people of Dartford themselves. I question much if the Lady Isabel is aware of the honor intended her. My daughter has just come from the priory, and she heard nothing of the Princess's visit."

"Here comes your daughter," said the outlaw, directing his attention to Editha, who was speeding towards them. "She has something to tell you."

"She ought not to have quitted the spot where I left her," said the smith, frowning.

Bidding his confederate a hasty adieu, he was about to depart, when Editha, who ran with great swiftness, came up.

Wat Tyler looked angry, but the outlaw was glad of the opportunity afforded him of exchanging a word with the fair damsel.

He did not ride off, therefore, as Wat Tyler hoped he would, but saluted her respectfully.

"Give you good day, fair maiden," he said, with a smile that sat very ill on his grim visage.

Editha returned his salutation, but not without visible embarrassment; for she could not conceal the mingled terror and aversion with which he inspired her.

In reply to her father, who chided her for disobeying his injunctions, she said, "I thought you would like to know that some great persons have just arrived at the village. There was quite a long cavalcade of nobles, knights, esquires, and ladies, one of whom was magnificently attired, and rode a richly-trapped palfrey. I could see her quite distinctly from where I stood on the brow of the hill. The ladies with her looked younger than she did, but were not so richly dressed, though they all wore silks and velvets; but her apparel glittered in the sunshine like gold. A thought crossed me that it might be the King's mother, the Princess of Wales."

"You guessed rightly," fair damsel," observed the outlaw, nothing abashed by the coldness with which Editha regarded him; "it was the Princess of Wales."

Her Highness is performing a pilgrimage to Canterbury."

"The Lady Isabel has always told me the Princess is very devout and good, and passes much time in prayer," said Editha. And she added, earnestly, "I hope St. Edmund and St. Thomas, and all good saints, will watch over her, and guard her from every danger—especially from robbers, who may lie in ambush to fall upon her."

"Her Highness has too strong an escort with her, as you may have remarked, fair damsel, to be in any danger from robbers," rejoined the outlaw. "But were she wholly unattended, I am sure no one would molest her."

"I am glad to hear you say so," observed Editha. "The widow of the Black Prince, and the mother of the King, ought to be safe everywhere in England."

"Go to, child! the Princess is not the friend of the people," observed Wat Tyler, sternly.

"Nay, dear father, I have heard quite the contrary," replied Editha. "The Princess, who always speaks the truth, says she is very compassionate and charitable, distributes large alms among the poor, and would redress all grievances, if she could."

"She must have some influence over her royal son," said Wat Tyler. "Why does she not induce him to make all men free—to relieve them from the tyranny of the nobles—to mete out even justice—and to lessen the taxes? If she did this, the people would bless her."

"She does all she can, I doubt not, dear father. But the young King may have ill counsellors."

"Ay, marry has he; but they will be speedily removed."

"Do you mean that he will be forced to dismiss them, father?"

"Mark my words, child. Ere a month shall have passed, the young King will have other and better counsellors; who will tell him plainly what the people want, and what must be conceded to them, if he would continue to reign."

"Then you think a change is at hand, father?"

"I am sure of it, child—a great change. Many will be hurled from their high places, never to rise again! They cannot resist the power that will be directed against them—the power of a long-enslaved people, who have burst their fetters, and are determined to assert their rights!"

"I do not like to hear you talk thus, dear father," said Editha. "I hope the people will not rebel. They may be treated with unjust severity by their lords; but if they complain to the King he will redress their wrongs."

"They will not sue for justice, but insist upon it!" rejoined Wat Tyler.

"And they will speak in language that cannot be misunderstood, and to which the King has been hitherto unaccustomed," observed the outlaw.

"I am too young to advise you, dear father," said Editha; "and I would not presume to speak did I not fear you may place yourself in fearful jeopardy by aiding this rebellious scheme, which, I can perceive, is on foot. Take no part in it, as you value your safety!"

"You are wise beyond your years, child," said her father; "and are better able to give advice than many of your elders. But your discernment fails you now. You are ignorant of the sufferings of the people, and of their utter inability to obtain redress."

"Surely, they can obtain redress by lawful means?"

"No!" replied her father, sternly; "justice is utterly denied them. They have borne their burden till it has become unsupportable; and they must cast it off, or sink under the weight. The nobles have had repeated warnings; and if they will not heed them, they must take the consequences."

"They shall not tyrannize over us much longer!" said the outlaw. "We will sweep them all from the face of the land!"

"And seize upon their possessions—is that what you mean?" cried Editha, with disgust. "Father," she added, turning to him, "the cause cannot be good that renders it necessary to associate with lawless men."

Wat Tyler repressed the angry remark that rose to his lips; and, changing his manner suddenly, said, "You think we have been talking seriously, child."

"Have you not?" she cried, eagerly.

Her father replied by a rough laugh, in which the outlaw joined.

"Not we!" said the latter. "I but carried on the jest started by your father—ho, ho!"

"'Tis for poor men to rebel," added Wat Tyler. "I have too much to do, and gain too much."

"And I can help myself to what I want!" laughed the outlaw. "The nobles must submit to my exactions; not I to theirs."

Editha did not seem convinced by these assertions; but, being anxious to get her father away, she made a movement to depart, saying she wished to see the Princess of Wales.

With a significant glance at the outlaw, Wat Tyler immediately followed her.

"I hope you will have nothing to do with that man, dear father," she remarked, as they walked along. "His appearance terrifies me!"

"Oh, you will get accustomed to him in time." "Never! I shall never be able to endure him! But he will not dare to enter the village, so I am not likely to behold him again."

Wat Tyler made no reply to this observation, and they went on in silence.

The outlaw's thoughts dwelt upon Editha as he rode back to his men.

"A lovely creature," he mentally ejaculated. "I must ask her father to give her to me as a wife. He cannot refuse; and her own consent is unnecessary."

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE PRINCESS OF WALES VISITED THE PRIOR OF ST. MARY AND ST. MARGARET.

JOHANNA, daughter of Edward of Woodstock, widow of the Black Prince, and mother of Richard II., had been accounted the most beautiful woman in the kingdom, and she was superbly handsome.

By her first husband, Sir John Holland, who, in right of his wife, was created Earl of Kent and Lord Wake of Lyndell, she had two sons, the elder of whom succeeded to the title on the death of his father, while the other was merely Sir John Holland. Both were proud and ambitious, and great favorites with the young king.

Owing to the death of her renowned consort in the lifetime of his father, Edward III., the Princess of Wales never rose to the throne. Devotedly attached to her son Richard, she constantly prayed that he might become a great warrior like his sire.

She dreaded John of Gaunt, believing that he designed to dethrone her son; but she had equal reason to fear the baneful influence exercised over the young king by his two half brothers. Maternal partiality, however, blinded her to their faults.

The Princess was not ignorant of the general discontent caused among the common people by the capitation tax; but she did not apprehend any serious result, far less imagine that an insurrection was imminent.

It was at the instance of the Archbishop of Canterbury that she had undertaken her present pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas a-Becket.

She was accompanied in the journey by her ladies, all of whom were high-born damsels of great beauty; by a numerous and splendid retinue of nobles and knights, at the head of whom was her handsome and haughty son, Sir John Holland; by her confessor, her physician, her almoner, esquires, pages, yeomen and groom, all in the royal liveries; two yeomen ushers, two grooms, two pages, and a guard of armed men.

Though the Princess of Wales was no longer the peerless beauty who, as the widowed Countess of Kent, had captivated that flower of English knighthood, the brave Edward of England, Prince of Wales and Aquitaine, she was still, as we have already said, exceedingly handsome, and possessed great dignity of manner.

Her complexion was ravishingly fair, and her dark tresses, arranged in thick square plaits at the side of the face, set off her finely-cut features.

At the back of her head she wore a caul, adorned with precious stones, from which streamed a long contoise. Her gown, of satin tissue, fitted tightly at the waist, so as to display her charming figure, and was sufficiently long to cover her feet. Her cyclas, or upper tunic, was of cloth of gold. Her girdle, which hung loose above the hips, was studded with gems. From it was suspended a *gipciere*, or purse of crimson velvet, adorned with gold lace tassels. Nor can it be supposed that she was unprovided with a rosary.

The trappings of her palfrey were of blue velvet, embroidered all over in gold and silver thread, with the royal badge of the white hart, crowned and chained, the sun emerging from a cloud, and the *planta gentilis*, or broom plant.

Thus splendidly arrayed, the Princess of Wales completely outshone the troop of noble damsels by whom she was attended. Yet they were the fairest ornaments of the Court; surpassingly beautiful and richly attired. But they paled beside her like stars in the presence of the queen of night.

Sir John Holland possessed a tall and graceful figure, set off by rich apparel; but his handsome features were marred by an expression of pride and arrogance. He rode a high-mettled Andalusian jet, given him by the Duke of Lancaster, and the impatient movements of the fiery horse accorded with his own haughty deportment.

He was accoutered in a light blue tunic, interwoven with threads of gold and silver, fitting tightly to his person, but having loose sleeves. A short two-edged sword hung from his side, and a *gipciere* was attached to his girdle. His hose were parti-colored, blue and white, and his red Morocco leather boots had enormously long peaked points—then called *cracowes*—fastened to the knees with chains of gold, and preventing the use of the stirrup. His spurs were of gold.

On his dark-brown locks, cut short, and square on the forehead, but allowed to hang down on the side, he wore a blue velvet cap, trimmed with costly fur, and having an ostrich feather at the back, that drooped over the head, and was secured by a diamond clasp. We have been thus minute in describing the rich attire of the young King's half brother, because we desire to give some notion of the splendor affected by the Court gallants of the period.

Indeed, all the young nobles and knights who now formed the Princess's equipage wore velvet doublets and mantles of varied hues, and more or less richly embroidered, parti-colored hose and cracowes.

The royal confessor and almoner rode upon mules, and could easily be distinguished among the gaily attired throng, by their dark stoles and hoods.

Sumpter-mules followed, laden with trunks, containing change of apparel for the Princess and her ladies; and the armed escort brought up the rear.

After descending the hill, the *cortege* proceeded to the priory, the gardens and outbuildings of which extended to the foot of the down.

A harbinger, apparelled in the royal livery, had been sent on to announce the approach of the Princess, so that her arrival was expected.

Passing through the embattled gateway, in front of which a considerable number of villagers, of both sexes, were collected round the procession, the Princess and her suite entered the spacious yard; the armed men being left outside the gate.

Beneath the deep-arched doorway of the religious edifice, with a cluster of nuns behind her in white, angular

head-dresses and gorgets, was stationed the Prioress, awaiting her royal visitor.

So rigid was the attitude of the Lady Isabel, that as she stood there, with her arms folded upon her breast, in her loose, white woollen robe, worked with a cross, with her coverchief on her head, and a pleated linen barbe beneath her chin, she looked like a sculptured effigy on a tomb.

The only signs of life discernible in her pale and motionless features came from the eyes.

With the assistance of the grooms, the Princess alighted from her palfrey, and attended by the pages, and followed by the whole of her ladies, stepped toward the Prioress, who advanced to meet her in a very stately manner, and stretching her arms over her, as she bent reverently, pronounced a benison upon her.

This ceremonial performed, the Lady Superior bade her royal visitor welcome, and conducted her into the priory.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRIORESS OF ST. MARY AND ST. MARGARET, DARTFORD.

ISABEL DE CAVERSHAM, Prioress of St. Mary and St. Margaret, belonged to a noble family: and before her retirement from the world—now some fifteen years ago—had been distinguished for grace and beauty. Knights had worn her colors and contended for her smiles.

Once the fairest of the fair, the Lady Isabel had become prematurely old; her dark tresses were streaked with gray, and though her face still retained its noble outline, its softness and comeliness had fled.

Yet she was barely thirty-five. Never now did a smile play upon her thin lips; but though her looks were severe, and her manner cold, her heart was full of kindness and compassion.

Among the sisterhood, she had no especial favorites, though several were high-born like herself; but she was greatly attached, as we have shown, to the smith's daughter, Editha, who had been brought to her, when a child, by Dame Tyler, and whom she had caused to be carefully instructed by Sister Eudoxia, one of the elder nuns.

The Lady Isabel led her royal visitor to the refectory, a large hall, wainscoted with dark oak, and provided with two long, narrow tables and benches for the sisterhood, and an elevated table for the Princess and her guests.

At the upper end of the hall was a large painted wooden carving of the crucifixion. Midway was a reading-desk, from which grace was said before each meal. At the bottom of the hall were open hatches communicating with the kitchens, whence the simple fare allotted to the sisterhood was brought.

All the domestics were lay sisters, and wore the habits of the order. They were now garnishing the upper table, while the nuns were assembled in the center of the hall.

Shortly after the entrance of the Princess, her ladies made their appearance; and several of them having relatives among the nuns, affectionate greetings took place. Thus mingled together, the gayly-attired damsels and the saintly sisters in their woollen robes and white head-dresses and wimples, formed a curious picture.

The only male person privileged to enter the nunnery were the confessor and the almoner, and they were presented to the Lady Superior by the Princess. Nobles, knights and esquires were compelled to remain without in the court-yard. Even the pages were excluded.

All being arranged on the upper table, the Prioress besought her royal guest to take some refreshment; but the latter declined, telling the Lady Isabel that she wished to confer with her in private.

On this the Prioress signed to a dignified nun, whom she addressed as Sister Sulpicia, and bade her take her place; after which she quitted the hall with the Princess, and conducted her to a locutory, or parlor, on the other side of the building.

They were preceded by Sister Eudoxia, the elderly nun, of whom we have spoken; and having ushered them into the locutory, the sedate sister, whose countenance seemed as if it could never be ruffled, immediately retired.

The locutory, which was used by the Prioress and the sisters for conversation, differed little from an ordinary parlor of the period. It was furnished with high-backed oak chairs, one of which, more elaborately carved than the rest, and provided with a brocaded cushion and a velvet foot-stool, was reserved for the Lady Superior. Near this was a small oak table. The walls were hung with tapestry. The bay windows were filled with stained glass, that gave a dim, religious light to the room, and adorned with a picture of the Madonna.

No sooner was the door of the locutory closed by Sister Eudoxia than a remarkable change took place in the deportment both of the Prioress and her royal guest.

As yet they had given no sign of previous acquaintance. Now it was certain they were old friends. After gazing at each other affectionately for a few moments, they embraced as tenderly as sisters.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE COUNSEL GIVEN BY THE LADY ISABEL TO THE PRINCESS.

WHEN the first effusions of delight were over the Lady Isabel begged of the Princess to take the state-chair, and sat down opposite her.

"I did not think I should ever see your Grace again," she said. "But though many years have flown since we met, my love for you is in nowise diminished, and you have rarely been absent from my thoughts. But you have never come near me," she added in a tone of slight reproach.

"You know why I have not visited you, dearest Isabel," replied the Princess, "so I need make no excuse.

I hope you are happy. I did not expect to find you so much changed."

"I am as happy as I am ever likely to be in this world," said the Prioress, mournfully, for some painful recollections had evidently rushed upon her. "You yourself have had a great sorrow; but the affliction you have undergone has not impaired your beauty."

"I marvel at it, for I have suffered much and deeply," rejoined the Princess; "but I have been obliged to smother my grief. When I lost the noblest, the bravest, the best husband ever possessed by woman, I should have followed your example and have retired to a convent, had it not been for the prince, my son. But I promised his royal father, who foresaw the danger he would incur when he came to the throne from his ambitious uncles, that I would watch constantly over him, and I have kept my word. Only by ceaseless vigilance have I preserved the young king from their designs. You may think I have uncontrolled authority, but I have little real power. Richard is surrounded by favorites and flatterers, and will not always listen to my advice."

"Be not discouraged, gracious madam," said the Prioress, earnestly. "Persevere in your efforts to keep the youthful king in the right course, and make him worthy of his illustrious father. I would you had power to redress the grievances of the people, who suffer much from oppression; and if their complaints continue unheeded, I fear they will break out into open rebellion. I do not desire to alarm your Grace, but I must not conceal from you that there is great murmuring among the peasantry in this part of Kent, and also, as I understand, in Essex."

"Discontent everywhere prevails," said the Princess, "and unhappily there is a good cause for it. But an insurrection would serve the Duke of Lancaster's purpose, as it might end in the king's dethronement, and enable the duke to seize the crown. Therefore the people are goaded on instead of being quieted."

"Is it possible the king can be insensible to this danger?" asked the Prioress.

"He has perfect faith in the loyalty of his uncles, and will not believe me when I warn him against them. He thinks my apprehension groundless."

"Have you lost your influence over him?"

"Not entirely. But I must confess it is less than it used to be. I have told you the King is surrounded by flatterers, who are secretly adverse to me."

"By counteracting their designs, you cannot fail to regain your influence over your son. But your first business must be to save him from his present danger. Believe me, it can only be averted by making large concessions to the people."

"Were I to propose such a measure as you recommend, I should array all the nobles against me. Besides, I am certain the Council of State would reject it."

"Not if the King insists. Something must be promptly done to allay the present agitation, or great calamities will inevitably ensue. The throne itself may be shaken."

Pronounced with great solemnity, these words could not fail to produce a strong effect upon the listener.

"Give heed to my warning, Princess," pursued the Lady Isabel, with increased earnestness of tone. "Let not the King hesitate, or he may be forced into compliance."

"Ha!" exclaimed the Princess; "you have heard more than you choose to tell me."

"I have heard more than I dare repeat," rejoined the Prioress. "Had I not seen your Grace to-day, it was my intention to write to you."

"Can you give me any proofs of the dangerous design you apprehend, that I may lay them before the King?" demanded the Princess.

"Impossible! But I may perhaps obtain more precise information before you return from Canterbury. Think you not, since the danger is so imminent, that you ought to put off your pilgrimage?"

"I cannot," replied the Princess. "I have a vow to fulfill."

"Prolong not your stay more than is needful. Haply your Grace may think I exaggerate the peril, and am unduly apprehensive; but I have good reason for my fears. There is a smith in this village, whose daughter, Editha, comes daily to receive instruction from Sister Eudoxia, and from this damsel I have learnt much that has led me to make further inquiries, the result being to convince me that a rising of the peasantry is to be apprehended. The mischievous doctrines of the apostate priest, Wycliffe, who preaches equality and the partition of property, have been disseminated among the people by a Franciscan friar, named John Ball, and the seeds of sedition being thus scattered broadcast, are now producing a plentiful crop. Wycliffe deserves death. Neither the King nor our holy Church have a worse enemy. He would overthrow both."

"Wycliffe is protected by the Duke of Lancaster, and is therefore safe from punishment," observed the Princess. "Should it chance that the smith's daughter of whom you have just spoken is in the priory at this moment, I would fain question her."

"I will ascertain at once," replied the Lady Superior. And she struck a small silver bell placed upon the table.

The summons was immediately answered by Sister Eudoxia, who, in reply to the Prioress's inquiries, said that Editha had just come in, and had gone to the novitiate.

"Bring her hither," said the Lady Isabel. "The Princess desires to speak to her."

Much pleased by the order, Sister Eudoxia hastened to obey it.

"I am not sorry your Grace should see the young damsel," continued the Prioress. "I take great interest in her. She is very good and very gentle, and I hope may become a novice. But she is not yet old enough to profess."

"What is her age?" inquired the Princess.

"Scarce fifteen," was the reply.

"She must have been born about the time you entered this retreat," observed the Princess.

Made quite inadvertently, this remark caused the Lady Isabel to become pale as death, and the Princess regretted that she had uttered it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAPIS LAZULI TABLET.

SHORTLY afterwards Editha was ushered into the locutory by Sister Eudoxia, who immediately retired.

The young damsel made a profound obeisance to the Princess, and then inclining to the Lady Superior, kissed her hand.

Struck by her remarkable beauty and composure of manner, the Princess contemplated her with surprise, not unmixed with curiosity.

"This fair girl cannot be a smith's daughter," she remarked in an undertone, to the Prioress.

"Tis as I have stated," rejoined the Lady Isabel.

"And her mother?"

"Is a very worthy dame of like degree."

For a moment the Princess seemed lost in reflection. Then with a very gracious smile, she addressed Editha.

"Have you always dwelt in Dartford, child?" she asked.

"Always, your Grace," was the reply; "and I have no desire to dwell elsewhere."

"Not even in a palace?" asked the Princess.

"Such a thought has never entered my head. A palace is no place for me."

"A discreet reply," said the Princess, smiling approvingly. "But suppose I were to make you one of my handmaidens?"

Editha looked at the Prioress, not knowing exactly what answer she ought to give.

"Be not afraid to speak, daughter," said the Lady Isabel.

"I have taken a fancy to you, child," pursued the Princess, "and I should like to have you near me."

"I am deeply beholden to your Grace," replied Editha. "But I am so happy in the priory, that I should be loth to quit it. All the Sisters are kind to me; but kindest of all is our holy Prioress, and I should be ungrateful, indeed, if I could leave her."

"Heaven forbid I should tempt you, child," cried the Princess. "Think no more of what I have said. I am glad to find you are so warmly attached to the good Prioress, who well deserves your love."

"Our Lady Superior has often spoken to me of your Grace," said Editha, "and has held you up to me as a model of piety and goodness."

"Nay, you must not learn to flatter, child," observed the Princess.

"I have told you, daughter, that the Princess is most anxious to redress the grievances of the people."

"That I am," said the Princess. "Do the people of Dartford complain?" she added, to Editha.

"They do more than complain, your Grace," was the reply—"they threaten; and I fear if something be not done speedily to tranquilize them, they will rise in revolt."

The Princess and the Lady Isabel exchanged glances. "A few villagers cannot rise in revolt, child," remarked the Princess.

"The rising will not be confined to Dartford, gracious madam; but will extend to the whole country, which is in a most disturbed state, owing to the preaching of Friar John Ball. He is now in prison, but his discourses are repeated by others, coupled with denunciations of vengeance."

"Vengeance against whom?" demanded the Princess.

"Against the nobles, your Grace," replied Editha.

"Has the King been threatened?"

"No, madam; but threats are frequently uttered against his ministers."

"And such seditious talk is tolerated there?"

"Not tolerated, gracious madam; but it cannot be repressed. The peasantry are deeply discontented, and keep little guard upon their tongues. Could your Grace behold their sullen countenances, when they assemble to discuss their wrongs, as they term them, or listen to their murmurs against their oppressors, as they designate the nobles, you would think that such signs of danger ought not to be neglected."

"They shall not be neglected," remarked the Princess.

"I feel I am presumptuous in speaking thus," added Editha. "But my zeal must plead my excuse."

"You have spoken well," rejoined the Princess; "and I thank you."

Then taking a small tablet of lapis lazuli, garnished with precious stones, from her gipciere, she graciously bestowed it upon the damsel.

"As coming from your Grace, I shall ever prize the gift," cried Editha, in accents of the liveliest gratitude, and pressing the tablet to her heart as she spoke.

The Princess then announced to the Lady Isabel that she was about to depart.

"I would fain tarry longer with you, holy mother," she said, "and profit by your discourse. But time presses. After hearing mass at St. Edmond's Chapel, I shall proceed on my pilgrimage to Canterbury."

"All good saints watch over your Grace!" exclaimed the Prioress, fervently. "And may holy St. Thomas listen to your supplications, and grant your prayers!"

Summoned by the bell, Sister Eudoxia appeared, and threw open the door of the locutory; and the Princess, passing out with her royal visitor, conducted her through several passages to the entrance hall, where the nuns had assembled.

All was in readiness for the Princess's departure; her ladies were on horseback; her palfrey was waiting for her.

The Prioress attended her to the door, and tears involuntarily sprang to the saintly lady's eyes, as she bade her royal visitor farewell.

However, she quickly regained her self-possession, and her deportment became as rigid as heretofore, and her looks austere.

By this time, the Princess had mounted her palfrey, and her parting look at the Lady Isabel was full of significance, though the latter seemed not to heed it.

All was stir and bustle in the court-yard, and the noise and confusion continued until the whole of the brilliant cavalcade had ridden forth from the gateway.

The Prioress remained to the last moment. At this juncture, Editha, who was standing behind her with Sister Eudoxia, watching the Princess's departure, preferred a request—or, rather, Sister Eudoxia preferred it for her.

"Holy mother," she said, "have I your permission to take Editha to St. Edmond's Chapel?"

Consent was readily given, and the young damsel and the elderly nun at once set out.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE ROUGH RESPONSE MADE TO SIR JOHN HOLLAND BY THE SMITH.

MEANWHILE, the cavalcade proceeded slowly on its way, followed by the villagers, who had been lingering outside the priory during the Princess's halt there.

As the splendid train approached the green, the throng increased; little groups being collected at intervals on either side of the road.

But though much curiosity was evinced to see the young King's mother, and the Court damsels in their rich attire, the male portion of the lookers-on raised no shouts, and some of them even refused to doff their caps.

Their sullen and disrespectful demeanor could not fail to strike the Princess, and confirmed what she had just heard.

Attended by two or three young nobles, Sir John Holland rode a little in advance of the cortege, and both he and his companions cast scornful glances at the spectators, which were well calculated to irritate them in their present mood.

On reaching the skirts of the green, the haughty young noble passed near a stalwart personage, whose garb proclaimed him to be a smith, and who stood there with his arms folded upon his broad chest, watching the procession.

The sullen expression of this man's countenance, and the manner in which he returned Sir John's haughty glance, provoked the young noble so much that he reined in his jennet, and called out:

"Who art thou, fellow, that thou darest knit thy brows at me?"

"I am Wat Tyler, the smith, of Dartford!" replied the other in a bold voice, but without in any way altering his deportment.

"Doff thy bonnet, thou saucy knave!" cried Sir Osbert Montacute, one of Sir John's companions. "Know'st thou to whom thou art speaking?"

"I have been speaking to the King's half-brother," replied Wat Tyler, resolutely; "but I owe him no homage!"

"Thou shalt owe him a lesson in courtesy, thou rude churl!" cried Sir John, raising his riding-whip to strike him.

But ere the whip touched his shoulders, the smith seized it and flung it to the ground.

This daring act would have been punished by Sir John's companions if a young damsel, who was crossing the green at the moment with an elderly nun, and saw what was occurring, had not flown to the spot, and interposed between the stalwart smith and the young nobles.

At the same time three, or four men, arrayed like minstrels, sprang forward.

"Fear nothing, Wat; we are with you!" cried a voice.

"Begone, child!" said the smith to his daughter; "you are in the way. If anyone touches me, he will rue it!"

And drawing his dagger, he stood upon his defense.

"No; I will not leave you, father," cried Editha. "Come with me. I beseech you!"

"Hold!" exclaimed Sir John Holland, who saw that a serious disturbance was likely to ensue. "Here comes our lady mother."

The Princess was now close at hand, her attention having been called to the affair by Sister Eudoxia.

At her approach the young nobles drew back, and Sir John Holland appeared somewhat disconcerted by the severe look she threw at him.

"This disturbance is most inopportune, she said, in a tone of rebuke to her son.

"Tis not my fault," he rejoined. "The knave was insolent, and deserved more punishment than he has received."

"You have done wrong, I tell you; this is not the moment to quarrel with the common people, but to conciliate them."

"You are best able to perform that task yourself, Madam," muttered her son. "Had you not been here, the knave would not have been alive to mock us as he doth now."

"No more, I command you," said his mother.

Then, addressing Editha, who was still standing before her father, she said, in a very gracious tone:

"I did not expect to see you again so soon, fair maiden. I thought I had left you at the priory."

"I was hastening to St. Edmond's Chapel, your grace, when"—

"No matter," interrupted the Princess; "'tis over now. This is your father, I presume?" she added, with a kindly look at Wat, that quickly banished the cloud from his brow.

Long before this he had restored the dagger to his girdle.

"Father, the Princess speaks to you," said Editha, plucking his sleeve.

Thus exhorted, Wat removed his cap, and made an

obeisance, such as he had not rendered to any one for many a day.

The Princess now smiled very graciously indeed, as did also Editha, for she was well pleased with her father's ready assent.

Addressing Wat Tyler, but, at the same time, taking care that her words should reach the ears of the other bystanders, all of whom had uncovered and observed a respectful demeanor, the Princess said:

"As you are aware, I am performing a pilgrimage to Canterbury, and it would grieve me if any outward circumstance should occur during my journey so as to interrupt my devotional thoughts. I have learnt, from your good Prioress, with whom I have just been conversing, that some discontent prevails among the inhabitants of this village. I am sorry to hear it. But rest assured that, on my return, I will speak to the King, my son; and I doubt not, if it be practicable, he will redress your grievances."

While the Princess was thus speaking, the crowd had greatly increased, and her words and gracious manners produced a marked effect upon the assemblage.

But positive enthusiasm was excited when she took her purse from her girdle, and giving it to an attendant, bade him distribute its contents amid the throng.

As a scramble took place for the gold pieces, loud shouts of "Long live the Princess of Wales!" and blessings were heaped upon her head.

His mother's treatment of the audacious smith, which he regarded as a reproof to himself, was exceedingly mortifying to Sir John Holland, and might have drawn some angry remarks from him had he not been attracted by Editha, whose beauty greatly impressed him.

He called Sir Osbert Montacute's attention to her, declaring he had never seen any one so lovely.

"She much surpasses all our Court damsels," he exclaimed. "Not one can compare with her."

"I cannot go quite so far as that, my lord," replied Sir Osbert, laughing. "But, for a country maiden, I own she is passing fair."

"There is nothing rustic about her," said Sir John. "She looks like one of Diana's nymphs."

"Or a vestal?" suggested the other.

"Aye, a vestal. She is purity itself, I'll be sworn."

"Then you must not gaze at her so ardently, my lord, or you will trouble her. See! she casts down her eyes, and blushes deeply."

"The blush heightens her beauty. By heaven, she shall be mine! 'Twill serve her churlish father right to rob him of his daughter."

"Beware, my lord, what you do! She must belong to the priory. One of the sisterhood has just joined her."

"That will not deter me," returned Sir John. "But an opportunity of speaking with her presents itself. My mother has just called her."

With this, he pushed forward, and addressed a few gallant remarks to the young damsel, who was thanking the princess for her generosity.

Evidently alarmed, Editha made no answer, but, as soon as she could do so with propriety, returned to Sister Eudoxia and her father.

Even then, Sir John did not desist, and regardless of the stern glances cast upon him by the smith, he followed Editha as she moved away, and continued to address her with even greater freedom than before.

"A truce to this, I pray you, my lord!" cried Wat Tyler. "My daughter is not accustomed to courtly compliments, neither are they agreeable to me."

"I care little whether thou art pleased or not, fellow," rejoined the haughty young noble. "I am not paying compliments to thy daughter, but telling her the truth. Her beauty ought not to be hidden at Dartford, and it were a positive crime to shut her up in a convent."

"Come away, Editha," cried Sister Eudoxia. "Your ears must not be defiled by this unrestrained talk."

"No; let her stay," said the smith. "She knows how to comport herself."

"Be not angry, father," whispered Editha; "I will exchange no word with him."

Falling to extract a word from her, or even a smile, Sir John at length departed, saying, as he bade adieu, "When we meet again, fair damsel, I trust you will be less obdurate."

Bounding off on his impatient jennet, he resumed his place at the head of the cavalcade, which was already in motion.

CHAPTER IX.

ST. EDMOND'S CHAPEL.

THE bulk of the assemblage followed the cortege to St. Edmond's Chapel, which, as the reader is aware, was situated at the further end of the village, and not far from the church.

Wat Tyler thought his daughter had best go home; but, as she wished to attend mass, and Sister Eudoxia undertook to take charge of her, he allowed her to proceed.

"After all," he said, "there is nothing to fear. This insolent noble will not dare molest thee in the chapel. I will go home and tell thy mother what has happened. She will be uneasy."

Sister Eudoxia and Editha did not reach the chapel till the Princess and her train had gone in; but though there was little room left, the nun and her charge were allowed to enter.

Completely filled by the splendidly-attired court damsels and nobles, the little temple presented a superb appearance—additional effect being given to the scene by the lights on the altar, and the gorgeous tints thrown on the assemblage from the painted windows. The atmosphere was heavy with incense.

Mass had begun, and the Princess was kneeling at the altar.

No place being vacant near the door, Sister Eudoxia and Editha were obliged to move on till they reached the foremost ranks, where they were enabled to kneel down.

What was the young damsel's fright when she found she had inadvertently placed herself next the very person she was most desirous to avoid.

She did not raise her eyes, but she felt his ardent gaze was fixed on her, and her mind became so disturbed, that all devotional feelings were banished, and, had retreat been possible, she would have quitted the chapel.

Her close proximity to her dreaded neighbor caused a tremor to run through her frame, and she shrank from his slightest contact.

Moreover, a strange terror seized her that he was in some way mixed up with her destiny, and that she would not be able to escape from him if she fell into his toils.

While she was endeavoring to shake off this painful idea, a low voice breathed in her ear, "You are mine!"

She knew who had spoken, and her terror increased.

Shortly afterwards the solemn service ended, and the courtly throng began to quit the chapel.

Fearful of encountering her dreaded neighbor's glance, she did not look up till she felt sure he was gone.

When she arose, the Princess was bending reverently to the altar before taking her departure, and allowing her to pass by, she followed slowly after with Sister Eudoxia.

The Princess had noticed her; and, on reaching the porch, summoned her, and said, with a gracious smile:

"Remember what I have told you. Should you require my aid at any time, fail not to come to me. Adieu!"

Assisted by her grooms and pages, who were standing by, the royal lady then mounted her palfrey, and rode off; but she was instantly succeeded by Sir John Holland, who had lingered with Sir Osbert Montacute to have a last look at the fair damsel who had bewitched him.

Curbing his fiery jennet as he passed the porch, he looked fixedly at Editha; but she cast down her eyes, and, provoked by her coldness, he rode on.

Amid the shouts and blessings of the villagers, the Princess then crossed the little bridge over the Darent, and attended by her retinue and escort, mounted the hill on the road to Rochester and Canterbury.

CHAPTER X.

THE LOMBARD MERCHANT.

SOMEWHAT retarded by the important event described the sports now commenced on the green, and were carried on merrily enough, the villagers being in high good humor owing to the Princess's liberality. For the time their grievances were forgotten.

There was dancing round the May-pole to the blithe strains of the minstrels, mummery, wrestling, and trials of skill with the quarter-staff, resulting in several broken pates. Moreover, there was much drinking of Whitsun ale.

Towards evening a large party of travelers from London arrived at the "Bull," and, having secured lodgings for the night at that comfortable and roomy hostel, took part in the village festivities.

Among the new-comers was a grave-looking man in a long gown and furred velvet cap. His dark complexion, aquiline nose, quick black eyes, and beetling brows, together with a foreign accent, showed that he was not an Englishman, though he spoke the language well.

Jacopo Benedetto del Treviso—for so was he named, from the city of his birth—belonged to a company of wealthy Lombard merchants at that time established in London, who lent money on usance, like the Jews, and were looked upon to be as great extortioners as the Israelites themselves by those who borrowed from them.

This enterprising company had recently farmed the Government taxes, and collected them with great rigor, as we have previously mentioned.

One of the richest members of the company, Messer Benedetto, exercised considerable influence over its councils. Indeed, it was he who had proposed the farming of the king's taxes, by which it was expected that a large sum would be realized.

Messer Benedetto lived luxuriously at his house in Lombard Street, but he was careful not to make any display when he traveled; neither did he carry much gold about him, so that if he were robbed his losses would be inconsiderable.

However, he had never yet been robbed, for he always contrived to join some strong party, whom marauders, such as Jack Straw, did not venture to attack.

On the present occasion he had started early in the morning from the "Tabard" at Southwark, where a rendezvous of travelers bound for Rochester and Canterbury was generally held. The muster was quite strong enough to ensure safety.

As will be conjectured, Messer Benedetto had some business on hand. At Dartford he expected to meet a tax-collector named Humphrey Shaxton, and he found him awaiting his arrival at the "Bull."

This Shaxton had previously been employed by the Government, and his roughness in the discharge of his obnoxious office recommended him to Benedetto.

Rude and brutal with the lower orders, Shaxton was fawning and obsequious to those of higher degree. His coarse, repulsive physiognomy indicated his nature. Red-haired and flat-nosed, he had a long upper lip and heavy chin.

Heretofore, Shaxton had worn the royal livery; but this he had now laid aside, and was habited in a dark serge tunic, with an inkhorn at his girdle, and a parchment account-book hanging beside it.

His red locks were covered by a felt cap, turned up only at the back, and having a long, projecting point.

Immediately after his arrival, Messer Benedetto had a long conference in private with the collector, and learnt that a good deal of resistance to his demands of three groats a head had been made by the peasantry.

Small as the tax appeared, they were very reluctant to pay it; but Shaxton declared he would allow none

to escape—youths or maidens—unless he was satisfied they were under the appointed age of fifteen.

"According to their own showing, they are all under age," he said; "but they can't deceive me" he added, with a coarse grin. "When I demand it, the poll-tax must be forthcoming. Already, I have got a good sum, as your worship will find when I make up my accounts."

"I am glad to hear it," replied Benedetto. "Have you begun to make a collection here at Dartford?"

"Not yet, worshipful sir," said Shaxton. "I must look about me, and make inquiries before setting to work. It saves time and trouble. I am told the villagers are very angry with the tax, and some of them declare they won't pay it. We shall see. There is a smith here, named Wat Tyler—an obstinate churl—who incites the people to resistance. He has a very pretty daughter, who looks sixteen or seventeen, though some say she is younger—under age in fact. But I am determined he shall pay the tax for her, if only to plague him."

"Right. 'Tis best to put down such mischievous knaves," observed Benedetto. "Begin with this smith."

"I have placed him first on my list, as your worship will observe," rejoined the tax-collector, opening his book.

"Has he other children liable to the impost?" asked the merchant.

"No; he has only this daughter," replied Shaxton. "I would he had a dozen—he should pay for them all. Most of the villagers are now assembled on the green, with their wives and families. If your worship will be pleased to step forth, you will see them, and may be able to form an estimate of their numbers, and the probable amount of impost they will yield."

"Come, then!" cried Benedetto.

And, followed respectfully by the tax-collector, he went forth to survey the festive scene.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TAX-COLLECTOR.

THE merriment was then at its height on the green. Youths and maidens were sporting themselves: various pastimes were going on; and, judging from the shouts and laughter, everybody seemed to be happy.

The only person who appeared out of place amid such a joyous scene was the tax-collector. Luckily, very few of the concourse were aware of his ill-omened presence; so he did not disturb the general enjoyment.

A large circle, some four or five feet deep, was formed round the May-pole, and through this ring our Lombard merchant contrived to penetrate, and was thus enabled to see the dancers, who were hidden by the throng.

Several of the damsels were comely, and he was particularly struck by the well-formed limbs of one of them. This was Marjory, the milk-maid, whom Editha had met earlier in the day; and though the active damsel had now been bounding round the May-pole for nearly an hour, with very little intermission, she did not appear half so much fatigued as the swain next her.

If her object was to tire out this poor youth, Marjory completely succeeded; for soon afterwards he was fair to give in, and she then relinquished the rope of flowers which she had held so long, and retired with him, flushed and panting, amid the cheers and laughter of the bystanders.

Messer Benedetto withdrew at the same time, having seen enough of the dancing, and looked round for Shaxton, whom he had left outside the ring.

He did not see him; but his eye alighted on a sturdy individual, in the garb of a smith, standing at a little distance with a comely dame, and a young damsel beside him.

It instantly occurred to the Lombard merchant that this person must be Wat Tyler, of whom the tax-collector had spoken, and he therefore regarded him with a certain curiosity; but his attention was quickly diverted from the smith to the young damsel with him, and he was gazing at her with surprise and admiration, when Shaxton came up.

After a word with his employer, the tax-collector strode towards the smith, and, in a loud and insolent voice, demanded his name.

"What is it to thee how I am called?" rejoined the other, sternly.

"Much," said Shaxton. "In virtue of mine office I am empowered to interrogate any man I think proper, and I again demand thy name and calling. Thou wilt incur a penalty an' thou refusest to answer."

"Wat Tyler is my husband's name," interposed the dame, fearing some disturbance might occur. "He is a smith and armorer."

"Tut, wife!" cried Wat. "He knows who I am well enough. Now, about thy business, fellow!"

"I have not yet done," said Shaxton, pertinaciously.

"This maiden is thy daughter?"

Wat's patience was nearly exhausted, and he was also enraged by the bold, and offensive stare with which the tax-collector regarded Editha.

"Aye, aye; she is our child," again interposed Dame Tyler.

"Child!" exclaimed Shaxton. "By St. Blaise! she is ripening into womanhood."

"Thou hadst best begone!" cried Wat Tyler, with a look so fierce and menacing that the tax-collector deemed it prudent not to provoke him further, more especially as several persons had gathered round the smith and seemed disposed to take part with him.

He therefore contented himself with saying, "Thou shalt hear more from me on the morrow," and marched away.

CHAPTER XII.

MARK CLEAVER, ELIAS LIRIPPE, AND JOSEPH GROUT-HEAD.

As Shaxton departed, Messer Benedetto came up, and said in a bland, half-apologetic voice to Editha, "I trust the man has not been rude to you, fair damsel?"

Editha scarce made any reply, being unwilling to enter into conversation with a stranger, whose manner, though courteous, was somewhat forward; but her father said, bluntly, "You should teach your servant better manners, sir."

"My servant!" exclaimed Benedetto.

"Aye; or your factor, or whatever you call him," said the smith. "Unless I am much mistaken, you are one of the Lombard merchants who have farmed the poll-tax, and this insolent fellow is your collector."

ASTOUNDED at being addressed in this manner, Benedetto glanced at the speaker, but his eye sunk beneath the smith's steady gaze.

"Art sure this is one of the Lombard merchants, Wat?" asked a bystander, noticeable for his round, rosy visage.

"As sure as I am that thou art an honest butcher, Mark Cleaver," replied Wat Tyler. "Let him deny it if he can. 'Tis to him and his brethren, and not to the King and the Government, that we now pay taxes. Why should we Englishmen allow ourselves to be despoiled by usurious foreigners?"

"Aye, wherefore?" cried several angry voices.

"If you will listen to reason, my good friends," said Benedetto, in a calm, persuasive tone, "I will show that you are not unjustly treated by us. We did not impose the taxes of which you complain."

"But the Government did not dare to collect the taxes, or they would not have sold them to you," interrupted Wat Tyler.

"The Government wanted the money immediately, and we advanced it," said the merchant. "You cannot in fairness, expect us to be losers by the transaction."

"You hope to be large gainers by it, I doubt not," said Wat; "but I think you will find yourselves out in your reckoning. 'Twas a wrongful bargain, and ought never to have been made!"

"Blame not us, good friends, but the Government that made it," said Benedetto, still in the same calm voice. "If the poll-tax presses hardly upon you, as it may in some cases, you should call upon the ministers to refund the money we have paid them."

"You are jesting with us, master," said Mark Cleaver. "I should like to see the ministers refund money."

"We have been bought and sold, that is quite clear," said another bystander, a little man, in a gray woolen jerkin, and a tall conical cap. "But these Lombard merchants and the ministers will both rue their bargain."

"Thou art a brave man for a tailor, Elias Lirippe," observed Wat Tyler. "Wilt thou clip off this caitiff tax-collector's ears?"

"Aye, marry will I—with my shears," replied Lirippe, suiting the action to the word.

"He shall fare worse if he comes to me," cried Joseph Grouthead, the cheesemonger. "I will cut him in twain as I would a Cheddar cheese."

"And eat him afterwards," observed Benedetto, dryly. "Methinks you grumble more than is needful. After all, three groats a head is not much. Were beauty taxable," he added, to Editha, "your father ought to pay twenty nobles for you. The King hath no fairer damsel in his dominions. 'Tis true, by St. Anthony, gainsay me who will!"

"Nay, we will none of us gainsay you," said Lirippe, who, like his companions, was somewhat appeased by the merchant's manner; "we are all agreed as to Editha's beauty."

Satisfied with the favorable impression he had produced, Messer Benedetto walked off towards another part of the green.

Wat Tyler looked after him, and observed, to Lirippe:

"Thou art right, gossip; these Lombard merchants will rue their bargain."

CHAPTER XIII.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

MEANTIME another traveler had arrived at the "Bull."

He had come from Canterbury, and as he had ridden across Dartford Heath, it was wonderful that he had met with no molestation from the outlaw and his band.

In age, this traveler was between fifty and sixty; but he was still active and full of vigor, and had a striking and highly intellectual countenance, grave in expression, and lighted up by fine dark eyes.

The face was a perfect oval, the nose being somewhat pronounced, but handsomely formed. His dark forked beard was still unmingled with gray, as were his locks. His frame was tall, spare, but remarkably well proportioned.

He wore a dark velvet tunic, over which was a loose gown, and his coif was encircled by a roll of stuff like a turban, which gave effect to his physiognomy. From his girdle hung a pouch, and he had a short sword by his side. He wore boots of supple leather, but not with the long pointed toes previously described.

As the traveler rode up to the inn, Urban Baldock, the host, a stout, good-humored personage, came forth to greet him.

"Your worship is welcome to Dartford," he said, "Will it please you to alight?"

"Canst thou give me a lodging, Baldock?" inquired the traveler.

"Ah, marry can I!" replied the host. "The house is full; for a large party has just arrived from the 'Ta-

bard,' at Southwark; but your worship shall not want a lodging, even if I give up my own chamber."

"Gramercy, good host!" replied the other; "I would not have thee put to inconvenience on my account."

"Nay, the inconvenience is nothing," said Baldock.

"'Twould be a reproach to me if I did not find accommodation for the renowned Geoffrey Chaucer, of whom, as a poet, all England is justly proud."

"Though thou hast not been at Court, thou hast learnt the art of flattery, I find, Baldock," said Chaucer, smiling, for he was not displeased by this tribute paid to his reputation. "But thou say'st thine house is full. Whom hast thou with thee?"

"They are mostly strangers," replied the host, "and I have not yet learnt their names. But I will inform myself anon. One of them is yonder on the green. You may discern him amid the crowd."

"I see him," observed Chaucer, looking in the direction indicated. "'Tis Messer Benedetto, the great Lombard merchant. I'll be sworn he has come here to look after the collection of the poll-tax, which he and his partners have farmed."

"No doubt your worship is in the right. There is a rascally tax-collector in the house. Would to heaven we were rid of him! for I fear he may breed some disturbance in the village."

With the host's assistance, Chaucer then dismounted; and having seen his horse taken to the stable and well cared for, he followed Baldock to the principal guests' chamber.

It was a comfortable room, with a very low ceiling, supported by great beams. The panels were of oak and the furniture—tables, chairs and benches—were also of oak. The bay windows were open, and looked upon the green.

There were no guests in the room; and the seats outside the house were deserted. All were watching the sports.

A good deal of noise arose from merry-makers; but the poet did not find it disagreeable, and declined to have the windows shut.

"What will your worship please to take for supper?" inquired the host. "I have a cold capon, and a cold ham, and a famous cold pasty; and I can fry you some noble crimson trout from the Darent, or silver eels, as you may like best, and I can add a dish of rare cray-fish from the Cray."

"Give me the trout and the capon," replied Chaucer. "And, hark ye, while you are preparing supper, bring me a flask of red Gascoigne wine and a manchete."

The host then disappeared, and the poet, left alone, leaned partly out of the window, to survey the pleasant scene.

And now a word about him.

Born in London in 1328, Geoffrey Chaucer, at the period of our story, was fifty-four; but, as we have already shown, he carried his years bravely. He was said to be of noble extraction; and it can, at least, be declared of him with certainty, that he looked well born.

Since the Conquest, all the poetry of the country had been written in Norman-French, then the dominant language; but while he was a student at Cambridge, and not more than eighteen, Chaucer made his first essay with an English poem, which, from its novelty, as well as from its beauty, obtained an immense success, and won for him the proud title he has ever since borne of "The Father of English Poetry."

Subsequently, Chaucer became a page at the Court of Edward III., and was speedily taken into favor by that monarch's second son, John of Gaunt, the ambitious Duke of Lancaster. It was at this time that Chaucer wedded Philippa, sister of the Lady Catherine Swynford, to whom the Duke of Lancaster was secretly attached, and whom he ultimately married.

During all this period the poet had been adding to his laurels. Appointed envoy to the republic of Genoa, he had an opportunity of visiting Petrarch; and on his return from this embassy, and from a mission to Charles V. of France, he received the lucrative appointment of Controller of the Customs. A butt of sack was not bestowed upon him, as on Poets Laureate in after-days, but a goblet of wine was brought him each day by the King's cup-bearer.

Chaucer next followed Edward into France, and was present at the unsuccessful siege of Rheims. Influenced by the example of the Duke of Lancaster, with whom he was now connected by marriage, the poet embraced the doctrines of Wycliffe, and thereby incurred the enmity of the clergy and their partisans.

On the accession of Richard II., so long as the Duke of Lancaster swayed his royal nephew's councils, Chaucer was in high favor at Court; but as the Duke's influence declined, the poet was neglected, and he had retired in disgust shortly before his introduction to the reader.

Amid the varied occupations—embassies, conflicts with the clergy, and political intrigues—Chaucer had found time to produce several most exquisite poems, but his greatest achievement, the "Canterbury Tales," which raised him to the highest pinnacle of fame, and has maintained him there ever since, was not accomplished till some years later.

While the poet was gazing through the window, charmed by the beauty of the evening, amused by the scene, and allowing various fancies to flit through his mind, he became aware of a young damsel, who was passing across the green sufficiently near to enable him to judge of her beauty.

So lovely, so graceful was she, that his eyes followed her as she moved along, and he almost refused to believe that the middle-aged dame who accompanied her, and evidently belonged to the lower class, could be the mother of so fair a damsel.

But as the host appeared at the moment, with the manchete and wine, he questioned him, and learnt, to his infinite surprise, that the fair damsel was the daughter of Wat Tyler, the smith.

"How so rough a fellow came to have a daughter so

fair and gentle puzzles me, but so it is," said Baldock. "The villagers think so highly of Editha's beauty, that they call her the Fair Maid of Kent."

"And she deserves the appellation," observed Chaucer.

"She is now going to the priory," pursued the host. "She attends matins and vespers each day. Lady Isabel, the Prioress, takes much notice of her."

"The fair damsel brings to mind her own youth and beauty, no doubt," said Chaucer. "Lovelier creature was never seen than the Lady Isabel Caversham. I well remember her. She had many lovers, and amongst them was one noble knight whom she preferred to all the rest. But he proved false, forsook her to wed another, and she buried herself in this nunnery."

"I have heard something of the story before," remarked Baldock. "But the scandalous gossips hinted at the time that the noble knight you mention had deeply betrayed her."

"Believe not the tale, good host," said Chaucer.

"Nay; it has long since been forgotten, I trust," rejoined Baldock. "Any faults the Prioress may have committed have been expiated, I make no doubt, by severe penance. She is worn to a skeleton by constant mortification of the flesh. The Princess of Wales, who is performing a pilgrimage to Canterbury, has been here to-day, and paid the holy mother a visit."

"I met the Princess and her train near Rochester," said Chaucer. "But I had no converse with her Grace. I am curious to have another look at the smith's fair daughter, in whom, as you say, the good Prioress takes so much interest."

"Nay; if your worship desires it, that can be readily accomplished," replied Baldock. "You have but to walk towards the priory, and you will meet her returning from vespers."

While this discourse was going on, Chaucer had eaten a few mouthfuls of bread and drank a cup of wine.

He now rose, and bidding the host keep back supper for an hour, went forth, and proceeded to the priory.

CHAPTER XIV.

SEDITIONARY TALK BENEATH THE OAK.

CHAUCER'S noble countenance and gravity of manner inspired respect, and caps were doffed as he passed through the concourse on the green, but no one ventured to address him except one stalwart individual, who separated himself from the throng, and strode towards him.

The poet stopped, and courteously awaited the man's approach.

"Master Geoffrey Chaucer will scarcely recollect me," said the burly fellow, doffing his cap; "but I well remember seeing him when he was in France with the late king and the Duke of Lancaster. I was then an archer in the train of Sir Eustace de Valletort."

"Hal! I mind thee well! Thou wert the stoutest archer Sir Eustace had; but I cannot recollect thy name."

"I am called Wat Tyler, and am now a smith in this village," replied the other.

"Wat Tyler, say'st thou?" exclaimed Chaucer, regarding him in surprise. "How long hast thou dwelt here?"

"Nigh sixteen years," replied Wat.

"Then thou wert here before the Lady Isabel retired to the nunnery?"

"I had married, and had set up as a smith about a twelvemonth before that event," said Wat.

"I thought so," mentally ejaculated Chaucer.

He then added aloud: "Had thy lord fulfilled his vow, the Lady Isabel might now adorn a court, instead of wearing away her life in a cloister. Nor do I think Sir Eustace is happy."

"Mayhap his conscience afflicts him," observed Wat. A momentary silence ensued, which was broken by Chaucer.

"Just now," he said, "as I was gazing from the window of the inn, mine eyes were greeted by a vision of exceeding beauty. 'Twas not a fairy, nor a nymph, that I beheld, but a young damsel, and I was told by the host that she was the daughter of Wat Tyler, the smith."

"My daughter!" exclaimed Wat. "You greatly overrate her beauty, worshipful sir."

"Not a whit. 'Tis true I caught only a momentary glimpse of her, but she appeared to me the fairest maiden mine eyes ever lighted on. However, I must needs see her again to make sure."

"Editha is gone to vespers at the priory, or I would beg you to step into my cottage. She would esteem it a great honor to converse with the famous Master Geoffrey Chaucer."

"Walk with me towards the priory. Perchance we may meet her," said Chaucer.

As they went on together the conversation dropped, and the poet seemed occupied by his reflections.

From time to time Wat Tyler stole a glance at him, but did not make a remark.

They had now quitted the village, and entered an avenue leading to the priory. Halting beneath a fine old oak, which threw its mighty branches across the road, Chaucer said to his companion:

"Art thou a Wycliffite?"

"Truly am I," replied Wat. "I am a friend of the Franciscan friar, John Ball, who is now imprisoned for preaching Wycliffe's doctrines."

"I saw John Ball while I was at Canterbury, and he spoke to me obscurely, as if he believed a religious insurrection to be at hand."

"If an insurrection takes place, it will not be merely against the clergy," said Wat. "Before the abuses of the Church are reformed the grievances of the people must be redressed."

"The ecclesiastical hierarchy must be abolished," said Chaucer.

"Serfdom destroyed, and property equally divided amongst all," added Wat.

"Nay, I cannot go so far with thee as that," rejoined Chaucer. "And be not led away by idle talk. Property never will be in common. Thus much I can tell thee, and thou mayst repeat it to thy fellows, if thou wilt; had not the Duke of Lancaster been thwarted—aye, constantly thwarted—in his plans for the people's benefit, most of their grievances would by this time have been remedied."

"I can easily understand why you should endeavor to justify the Duke of Lancaster, sir," rejoined Wat Tyler, boldly. "But his Grace has lost the people's confidence, and will never regain it."

"How! never regain it?" cried Chaucer.

"He is known to be ambitious, and they think he aims at the crown. I must speak plainly," rejoined Wat. "The people will not help him to dethrone his nephew, son of the Black Prince."

"He does not need their aid for any such rebellious design!" said Chaucer, in a tone of stern rebuke. "Great wrong is done him by the foul suspicion. The duke is the firmest supporter of the throne."

"But is he not mistrusted by his royal nephew—greatly mistrusted?" observed Wat Tyler.

"The duke hath many enemies, avowed and secret, and I know not what false assertions concerning him may have been made by the latter to the king; but this I wot well, Richard hath not a more royal and devoted subject than his uncle, John of Gaunt."

"Loyal the duke may be; but 'tis certain he is aspiring, and the people like him not."

"Would they like any prince?" demanded Chaucer, sceptically. "Would they follow any leader but one of themselves?"

"Time will show," rejoined Wat Tyler, with a feeling of self-exultation.

"Thou think'st we are on the eve of an insurrection—ha?" cried Chaucer, fixing a searching look upon him.

"Nay, I say not that," rejoined the other; "but I affirm that the people are resolved to obtain a hearing."

"And I tell thee again there is no one who can obtain a hearing for them, unless it be the Duke of Lancaster."

Wat Tyler shook his head.

"They fear least they should be betrayed," he said. "They think the duke will use them for his own purpose; and that gained, will sacrifice them."

"The rising will be instantly crushed without his support," cried Chaucer.

"I do not think so," rejoined Wat Tyler.

All this time there had been a secret listener to their discourse. Behind a neighboring tree was ensconced the tax-collector, who had followed them cautiously from the green.

Not a word uttered by either speaker had escaped Shaxton's quick ears. Having now heard enough, he prepared to decamp.

"'Twas lucky I followed them," he thought. "I have learnt a most important secret, which I can put to profit, by revealing it to the council. Evidently, an insurrection of the people is about to burst forth. Wat Tyler is concerned in it, and Master Geoffrey Chaucer is now privy to it; if, indeed, he be not, as I suspect, one of the chief contrivers. Both must be arrested. I will consult with Messer Benedetto. No; that were unwise—as, if he takes the matter in hand, I shall lose the reward. I must proceed cautiously. What if I were to send a message to the Lord Mayor, and Sir John Philpot? I will do it, if I can find a trusty messenger. But—hist! I hear footsteps! Some one comes this way. I must be gone."

With this, he stole noiselessly away, entirely escaping the notice of the two persons in his vicinity.

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT PASSED BETWEEN CHAUCER AND EDITHA.

The footsteps that had alarmed the spy were those of Editha and her mother, who were returning from the priory.

Wat Tyler pointed them out to the poet, but Chaucer did not require to be told who they were, for he instantly recognized the fair young damsel.

The pair quickened their pace as soon as they descried the smith, and presently came up. But they stopped at a short distance till called forward.

Chaucer did not embarrass the young damsel by regarding her too steadfastly; but, nevertheless, his gaze threw her into some confusion, and covered her fair cheek with blushes.

Whatever inference he drew from this rapid but close inspection of her features, he allowed no sign to escape him.

"This is Master Geoffrey Chaucer, child," said Wat Tyler, in a low tone, to his daughter.

The mention of that name operated like magic on Editha, and seemed instantly to dispel her timidity.

Raising her eyes, she gazed at the poet with mingled reverence and admiration.

"By St. Anselm! she is very like the Lady Isabel," thought Chaucer.

"Pardon my boldness," cried Editha; "I did not think I should ever behold Master Geoffrey Chaucer, and I cannot repress my delight at seeing him. Till now I thought he could be no mortal man."

"Then, I fear, you must be grievously disappointed," observed Chaucer.

"Disappointed!—no! I have hitherto regarded you as a superior being, whom I should not dare to address."

"But you have no such feeling now, I trust?" he said.

"No," she replied. "You look so good-natured, that I will venture to tell you that I have read 'The Court of Love,' and 'Troilus and Cressida,' and will try to express the pleasure these poems have given me."

"My daughter is never tired of reading your poems, worshipful sir," observed Dame Tyler.

"They afford me fresh delight every time I turn to them," cried Editha.

"I did not anticipate this gratification," remarked Chaucer. "Many compliments have been paid me, many flattering things have been said to me by Court dames, but none that have pleased me so much as your simple praise, for I am willing to believe it the language of truth."

"It is so," cried Editha earnestly.

Wat Tyler forbore to take any part in this conversation, but he listened to it well pleased, and when a proposal was made by Chaucer to return with the party to the village, the smith fell back with his wife, and allowed the poet and Editha to precede them.

Chaucer evidently took a lively interest in his young companion, which could not fail to gratify her, and she replied to all his questions with the most perfect candor and simplicity.

She told him of the constant kindness she had received from the good Prioress, and how warmly attached she was to her. At this he did not seem at all surprised, but he counseled her not to become a novice without due consideration.

Neither did he seem surprised when she told him of the notice that the Princess of Wales had taken of her that morning; but he said she was wrong not to accept the Princess' gracious offer of a place in her highness' household.

He looked very grave, however, when informed of the annoyance she had experienced from Sir John Holland.

"I strongly commend your prudence," he said. "You treated the insolent young noble as he deserved, and I trust you may never behold him again."

"But his last words, whispered in St. Edmond's chantry, seem to intimate that he meant not to desist from pursuing me," she said. "He terrifies me."

"If you have any real uneasiness, mention the matter to the Prioress, and she will advise you how to act."

"I have already done so, and she has promised to send a message to the Princess of Wales."

"Then you may rest easy," he rejoined. "Your persecutor will trouble you no more."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EREMIT.

THEY had now nearly reached the end of the avenue, when a friar was seen approaching from a side path.

His long gray gown almost covered his bare feet, and his cowl was drawn over the back of his head. A cord was tied round his waist, and from his girdle hung a long string of beads. A white beard added to his venerable appearance.

"'Tis Friar Gawin, the eremite," observed Editha. "He is going from his cell to the priory."

"Where is the hermitage?" inquired Chaucer.

"Not far hence, in the wood," she rejoined. "I pray you to excuse me, sir. I think, from the holy father's manner, that he desires to speak to me."

Chaucer bowed, and walked slowly on, and by the time Wat Tyler and his wife had joined Editha, the hermit came up.

"*Dominus vobiscum*?" he exclaimed. "Ye are well met. I have something to say to thee, daughter," he added, to Editha, "but I cannot say it now. Pri' thee bring her to my cell this evening," he continued to Dame Tyler.

"Shall I do so?" said the dame, appealing to her husband.

"Ay, marry," he replied; "wherefore not? The moon rises early."

"Come with them and thou wilt, brother," said the hermit to Wat. "Thou can't wait outside my cell."

"Nay, I am not afraid," rejoined the smith. "No one will molest them. As soon as the moon hath risen—and that will be about the ninth hour—you may expect them, father."

"I shall not detain them long," replied the hermit. "I have not much to say, but it must be said to-night."

"I hope you mean not to reprove me for any fault I have committed, father?" said Editha.

"You will learn in good time, daughter," replied the hermit. "At the ninth hour I shall expect you. The taper burning in the window of my cell will guide you through the gloom. You need have no fear. There are no evil things near my abode. All good saints have you in their keeping."

With this valediction, he pursued his way to the priory.

They did not overtake Chaucer till he had entered the village, and was close by the smith's habitation.

"I am now going to supper at the inn," he observed to Wat. "When I have finished my meal I should like to see you again."

"I will be with your worship in an hour," replied the smith.

"Shall I tell you how I shall pass the time while you are at supper?" said Editha, playfully, to the poet.

"Profitably, I am sure," he replied. "Very likely in reading your mass-book."

"Of a sooth, I shall pass the time profitably," she replied, with an arch look. "But it will be in reading your 'Court of Love.'"

And, with a gay laugh, she retreated to her father's dwelling.

Chaucer watched her till she disappeared, and then went on to the hostel.

CHAPTER XVII.

MYSTERIOUS TRAVELERS ARRIVE AT THE HOSTEL.

IN the principal room there were several guests, most of whom rose to return the poet's salutation as he entered.

A cover had been laid for him on a small table near the window, which was still left open, and to this pleasantly-placed table the host conducted him with some little ceremony, for Master Baldock was rather proud of this distinguished guest.

"I hope the trout may not be overdone," he said, in an apologetic tone; "for your worship hath stayed a little beyond your time, and the cook could not take them out of the frying-pan. 'Twould be a thousand pities if they were, for finer fish never came out of the Darent."

He would have run on in this strain, had not Chaucer cut him short; and when the trout were placed before the poet, he pronounced them excellent.

"Never did I taste better fish," he said, as he swallowed a deep draught of the Gascoigne vintage.

Having begun thus satisfactorily, he continued his repast with deliberation.

The room, as we have said, was well-nigh filled with guests, some of whom were supping, while others were quaffing Gaillac or Osey out of tall drinking-cups.

But there was more company outside than within the room. The benches in front of the window at which Chaucer was seated were occupied by villagers, who had been enjoying the sports on the green, and were now indulging in copious draughts of ale and metheglin.

Large flagons of these beverages were set on the long narrow tables before them, and were speedily emptied, and as speedily replenished.

The revelry was somewhat noisy, but it was quite good-humored. The minstrels, who had played at the May-pole, were among the company, enlivening them with their strains, and now and then with a song.

Chaucer very much enjoyed the scene, and the uproarious merriment that occasionally arose did not in the slightest degree disturb him.

But he did experience some annoyance from an ill-favored fellow, with red locks, and an unpleasant expression of countenance, whose eye was constantly upon him.

On inquiring who this individual was from the host, he learnt that he was Shaxton, the tax-collector.

To return to the guests in the room. Among them, at the next table to Chaucer, sat Messer Benedetto; and as the Lombard merchant and the poet were previously acquainted, a good deal of conversation naturally took place between them.

But their discourse was on general topics. Messer Benedetto made no allusion to the object of his visit to Dartford; nor did Chaucer mention what had brought him thither.

Even when the host spoke of Shaxton, Messer Benedetto did not care to own that the impudent tax-collector was in his employ.

Later on, however, when Wat Tyler made his appearance, the Lombard merchant turned away, and began to talk to those on his other side.

The burly smith did not enter the room, but stationed himself near the window; and thus placed, he could converse as freely with the poet as if he had been inside.

Shaxton made another attempt to listen to their discourse, but Wat's angry looks soon drove him away.

It had already become dusk, when some excitement was caused by the arrival of three well-mounted travelers, who came from the direction of Rochester.

They reined in their palfreys when they reached the inn, and gazed into the doorway in quest of an attendant to take their orders.

So muffled up were these persons in their hoods, and so enveloped in their mantles, that little could be discerned either of feature or figure; but they seemed young, and certainly, from the haughtiness of their manner, might be presumed to be noble.

Before they could alight, the host went out to them, and, with many obsequious bows, expressed his deep regret that he could not offer them a lodging, inasmuch as his house was quite full.

"We do not require a lodging," replied one of them, who appeared to be the chief of the party, in a haughty tone. "We merely need a draught of wine."

"That you can have, and of the best, noblesirs," replied Baldock. "Gascoigne or Rhenish, Gaillac or Osey. Will it please you to alight?"

The horseman, however, declined; but bade him bring a flagon of good Gascoigne wine.

"Stay!" cried another of the party. "Where can I find a smith? My horse hath cast a shoe."

"The smith can be readily found, for he is here at this moment," replied Baldock. "But I cannot answer that he will do the job—'tis somewhat late, and he may have closed his smithy."

"I will pay him double—nay, treble. I would not have my charger lamed for a hundred crowns," cried the other.

"I will tell him what you say," replied the host, hurrying off.

Presently he returned, with a large flagon of wine and a drinking cup.

"Wat Tyler, the smith, will attend you anon, noble sir," he said, filling the cup, and offering it to the one whom he took to be the chief of the party.

"Here he is, to speak for himself," added Baldock, as the stalwart smith could be seen making his way towards them through the villagers.

At this information, two of the party turned away their horses' heads, while the third pushed forward to meet the smith.

"Your horse wants a shoe, I understand?" said Wat.

"Ay," replied the other. "Name thy fee."

"A groat for every nail, and three groats for the shoe," replied Wat. "My smithy is close at hand; I shall be ready by the time you have drunk a cup of wine."

So saying, he strode off.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SMITH AT THE SMITHY.

On arriving at the smithy, Wat threw open the door, and divested himself of hood and surcoat, and pulling up the sleeves of his jerkin, seized the bellows with a vigorous arm, and soon blew up a flame in the forge.

None of his men were there, but he did not need

their aid, and in a few minutes the glowing iron was ringing on the anvil.

By this time he expected that the young noble who had commanded his services would have appeared; but, seeing nothing of him, he paused in his task to listen.

No sound was heard, except the distant shouts and laughter of the revellers at the hostel.

He did not, however, doubt for a moment that the nobleman would come, and controlled his impatience as well as he could.

But five minutes more elapsed, and he then resolved to wait no longer.

"I will not shoe his horse now if he will give me a golden mark for the job," he muttered. "These nobles think that a base mechanic must needs bide their pleasure, but this springal shall find his mistake—pest on them all!"

With this, he quenched the iron he had heated, resumed his hood and surcoat, and prepared to shut up the smithy.

The moon had now risen above the trees near the priory, and, by the light her beams afforded, he could plainly perceive a small party of horsemen galloping towards him across the broad, green area.

At first, he fancied these must be the young nobles he had expected, but he quickly changed his opinion. As the party drew nearer, he could not doubt, from their garb and accoutrements, that they were the outlaw and some of his band.

He had scarcely recovered from the surprise into which he was thrown by their unexpected appearance, than they came up.

"What brings thee here to-night?" he called out, in an angry voice, as Jack Straw reined in his black steed at the door of the smithy. "Say what thou hast to say, and begone. Many eyes are upon thee," he added, pointing to the assemblage at the hostel.

"By St. Nicholas! thou should'st thank, not blame me, seeing that I have come to aid thee," rejoined the outlaw. "Where is thy daughter?"

"My daughter! what of her?" cried the smith.

"Ah! my mind misgives me!"

"Is she safe within thy dwelling?" demanded the outlaw.

"She is gone with her mother to the hermitage, in the wood," replied Wat, trembling with anxiety.

"Fool that I was to allow her to go there at such an hour, but I dreamed of no peril."

"Answer me one more question," said the outlaw. "Hath there been a young noble here with two attendants?"

"He came to the inn not half an hour ago, and he, and those with him, have since disappeared," replied Wat.

"I know where they are gone," said the outlaw. "This daring noble means to carry off thy daughter, but I trust I am in time to rescue her. Thou art the dupe of a clever stratagem, Wat, which might have succeeded had I not chanced to hear of it."

"I see it all now!" cried the smith, almost frenzied with rage and anxiety. "That false hermit! but he shall pay dearly for his treachery! Tarry not another instant! To the rescue!—to the rescue!"

The outlaw did not require more urging, but dashed off with his followers to the wood.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HERMITAGE.

EDITHA and her mother set out for the hermitage without the slightest misgiving.

They could entertain no suspicion of Friar Gawin, who was well known to them, and who bore a high reputation for sanctity. Nor were they at all alarmed by the idea of a walk at so late an hour through the wood.

Familiar with the path that led to the cell, they could track it as readily in the gloom as in broad daylight, and had no fear whatever of molestation.

The walk through the wood proved delightful, as they had anticipated, and before they reached their destination the moon had risen, and showed them the hermit's solitary abode, situated in the midst of a clearing.

With the moonbeams shining upon it, the hermitage looked the picture of seclusion and peace. It was nothing more than a hut, rudely constructed by the recluse's own hand, with timber he himself had felled on the spot. The roof was thatched and overgrown with moss.

Near the door was placed a crucifix, composed of pieces of a pine tree nailed together.

Not far from the cell there was a clear, gushing spring, which was of great benefit to the anchorite, and had probably determined him in the choice of the spot.

He was standing at the door of his cell when the pair arrived, and came forth to give them his benediction, after which he took them inside.

A taper lighted up the little apartment into which they were ushered. The furniture consisted of a rudely fashioned table, on which stood an hour-glass, and three or four stools of equally rough workmanship.

In one corner was a small crucifix, and in an inner room was the pallet on which the anchorite stretched his limbs.

Bidding his visitors be seated, the hermit took a small casket from his gown, placed it on the table, and thus addressed Editha:

"I have a singular circumstance to relate to you, daughter," he said. "This evening, while I was reciting the *Credo*, there came a messenger to my cell, and, opening the door, said to me, 'Arise, holy father! Go to the smith's daughter, Editha, and bid her come to thy cell an hour after sunset.' 'Wherefore should I do this?' I demanded, in surprise. 'Thou art a stranger to me, and may'st have some evil design. I will not bear thy message to the damsel.' 'Dismiss thy fears,' said the man. 'No ill will befall her. On the contrary she will receive a

gift. In proof whereof, I now deliver to thee this casket; which I charge thee to place in her own hands.' 'But why make so much mystery?' I rejoined, hesitating to take the casket. 'Why not deliver it to her thyself?' 'I do mine errand,' replied the man; 'and if the noble lady from whom I come chooses to act thus, 'tis not for me to disobey her. I am a servant, and must do as I am bidden.' 'Since thou com'st from a lady, that alters the case,' I said. 'But may I not know her name?' 'I am enjoined to secrecy,' said the man; 'but thou shalt learn her name hereafter.'"

"You shall learn it now, good father," cried Editha, who had listened with great interest to the narration. "'Tis the Princess of Wales! None but her Grace could have sent me this rich gift.'"

"She has sent it in a roundabout way," observed Dame Tyler, who was not altogether free from suspicion. "Besides, she has already made you one present."

"Here is the casket, daughter," said the hermit, presenting it to the young damsel. "When I learnt that it came from a noble lady, I no longer hesitated; but took it, and promised to fulfil the messenger's injunctions."

"I cannot find words to express my obligations to you, holy father," said Editha. "But the casket is unfastened. Let us see what it contains."

And as she spoke, she opened the little box, and took out a chain of pearls.

"Pearls!" she exclaimed, holding them up. "Look, mother, how beautiful they are!"

"Beautiful, indeed!" cried Dame Tyler, gazing at them with admiration.

"In good sooth, they are costly ornaments!" said the hermit, holding up the taper, so that he could see them better.

"They are too costly for me!" said Editha, with a sigh.

"Nay; you must needs wear them, since they have been sent you by the Princess," remarked her mother.

"But how know I she has sent them to me?" said the damsel. "'Tis a mere guess. This chain puzzles me."

"Keep it till you hear more about it," said Dame Tyler.

"I will keep it till I have consulted the Lady Prior-ess," observed Editha, replacing the pearls in the box.

"Ay, the Prioress will give you good counsel," said the hermit. "But I see not why you should not wear them."

"Nor I," rejoined Dame Tyler. "Meantime, I will take care of the casket."

And she secured it in her pocket.

Just then a tap at the little window of the cell started them all.

CHAPTER XX.

SHOWING WHO SENT THE CASSET.

"HOLY Mary! what is that?" exclaimed the anchorite.

He then called out, in a voice loud enough to be heard by the person outside, "Who wants the hermit of the wood? I open not my door to a stranger!"

"'Tis the messenger who brought the casket this e'en," replied a voice. "Hath the damsel any message for me to my noble mistress?"

"Thou mayst enter," said the hermit, unbarring the door.

"Nay; let the damsel come forth to me," rejoined the man.

Having no apprehension, Editha complied with the request.

But as she issued forth, and looked about for the messenger, she perceived two or three mounted figures, partly concealed by the trees, and would have instantly retreated, had not a strong arm seized her, and, despite her cries, dragged her off.

In another instant, a scarf was twined tightly round her arms, so as to prevent any struggles.

Thus bound, she was lifted from the ground, and placed in front of a horseman, who seemed to be the chief of the party.

Alarmed by her outcries, the hermit and her mother would have come to her assistance, had they not been prevented by an armed man, who planted himself at the door of the cell.

"Release me!" cried the terrified damsel to the horseman, whose arm was round her waist as he sustained her in front of his saddle.

"Release you?—not I!" he rejoined, in an exulting tone. "I am too well pleased with the prize I have gained to part with you. I told you this morn you should be mine, and I have kept my word."

"Ah! it is he!" she cried, recoiling from him as far as possible, but he held her fast.

"You are completely in my power, damsel," he said.

"My father will hear my cries, and deliver me," she rejoined.

"Count not upon your father's aid, damsel," laughed Sir John Holland, for it was he. "I have taken great care to prevent any interference on his part. The unsuspecting smith is at work at his forge. My plan has been well contrived and well executed. Ha, ha!"

"Heaven will defeat your wicked design, I nothing doubt!" she returned.

And she renewed her outcries, calling upon St. Ursula, St. Agatha, St. Julia, and all saints who succor distressed damsels, to protect her.

Paying no attention to her cries, and believing they were unheard, except by those who could render no assistance, Sir John speeded along the narrow road through the wood, intending to turn off as soon as he came to an opening he had noted on the right.

Somewhat in advance rode Sir Osbert Montacute, while behind came two well-mounted and well-armed attendants.

On a sudden Sir Osbert stopped, and after listening for a moment, rode quickly back to his leader, and said:

"There is danger in front, my lord. Horsemen are approaching. I heard them distinctly."

"Are you quite sure?" demanded Sir John.

"Quite sure; and as far as I can judge, there are five or six in the company."

Though they conferred in a low tone, Editha overheard what passed, and hoping there might be a chance of rescue, renewed her outcries.

They were immediately answered by the advancing party.

"Confusion!" exclaimed Sir John Holland. "We must fly!"

And turning his horse's head, he galloped back in the direction he had come, followed by the others.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE RESCUE.

WITHOUT resorting to violence, it would have been impossible to silence the affrighted damsel; and, guided by her cries, the pursuers advanced with increased rapidity, and seemed to gain on the flying party.

Sir John and his attendants had dashed past the hermitage, and entered another path that led deeper into the wood; but finding themselves close pressed, though they had not yet seen their pursuers, they agreed to separate, and Sir John, abruptly quitting his attendants, plunged into the thicket.

Not without difficulty did he force his way through the underwood; but he deemed himself secure, for his fair captive had become insensible.

He had not, however, penetrated far into the wood, when the crashing of branches announced that one of his pursuers was at hand, and a fierce voice exclaimed, "Turn thee, vile robber and desolator, and deliver up the maid thou hast stolen. Stop, I say. Thou canst not escape me."

Sir John wheeled round instantly at the summons, and drew his sword.

He had gained a small open patch, on which the moonlight fell, so that he was fully revealed to his pursuer, who burst forth next moment from the surrounding trees.

So wild and fantastic was the appearance of the horseman, that Sir John gazed at him and his sable steed with wonder, not unmingled with superstitious terror.

Recovering himself instantly, he aimed a blow at the outlaw, which, had it taken effect, would have terminated that daring individual's career; but the other nimbly avoided the stroke, and wresting the young noble's sword from his grasp, seized him by the throat, crying out:

"Yield the damsel to me, or I will slay thee and take her!"

"Never!" exclaimed Sir John.

And by a vigorous effort, he succeeded in freeing himself from the outlaw's grasp, and assailed him with his dagger.

In the conflict that ensued, either by his master's hand or by that of the outlaw, Sir John's charger received a mortal wound in the neck, and as the noble animal sank to the ground, the still inanimate damsel was snatched from her captor by the outlaw.

Before Sir John could disengage himself from his fallen steed, his successful antagonist was gone.

But he heard the sound of a horn, winded by the outlaw to recall his band.

CHAPTER XXII.

EDITHA DISTRUSTS HER DELIVERER.

MEANTIME, the outlaw, being well acquainted with the intricacies of the wood, had easily regained the narrow path leading to the village, and pursued it leisurely, in the expectation of being rejoined by his band.

As he gazed at the beautiful head now reclining upon his shoulder, evil thoughts crossed him, and he could scarcely make up his mind to relinquish the rich prize he had gained.

"The maid has fallen into my hands," he thought. "Why should I not retain her, and make her my bride? But no; that would cause a difference 'twixt me and her father, and I must not quarrel with him now."

His gaze was fixed upon the fair face with a passionate admiration, when Editha opened her eyes, and encountered his ardent glance. She was almost as much affrighted as she had previously been while in the power of the young noble.

As soon as she understood what had happened, she thanked him for delivering her, but besought him to set her down.

"Nay, I must carry you to your father, fair damsel," he said; "or I shall lose all credit with him for the slight service I have rendered you. Besides, you have scarcely strength to walk."

"Perhaps not," she replied, resigning herself unwillingly to her disagreeable position. "But you will heighten my gratitude if you will take me home quickly."

She then inquired anxiously concerning her mother, but he could give her no information. His band, however, coming up at the moment, he despatched one of them to the hermitage.

This done, he set off at a gallop, and soon reached Wat Tyler's dwelling.

The smith was standing at his door, in a state of the greatest disquietude; and as he received his daughter from her deliverer, he clasped her to his heart.

"Thank Heaven, you are safe!" he cried. "But where is your mother?"

"You will see her presently," replied the outlaw. "You need have no uneasiness respecting her. She is in no danger."

"And what of that false friar?" cried the smith, stamping on the ground with rage.

"Be not angered with the good hermit, father," said

Editha. "You suspect him unjustly. He has been duped by this wicked young noble. I will tell you all anon."

"Go in, then, child," said Wat, much pacified by this assurance. "I must confer with you ere you depart," he added to the outlaw.

"Will it be safe to enter your dwelling?" demanded the other.

"Perfectly," replied Wat. "All the village has now retired to rest."

Thereupon the outlaw sprang to the ground, and, giving his steed to one of the band, entered the cottage with the smith.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SUDDEN QUARREL.

THE room was dimly lighted by a lamp, which revealed its low, raftered roof, large fireplace, with the remains of a wood fire still burning on the hearth, and simple furniture, such as might be expected in a tenement of the kind.

But there were several pieces of armor hung up against the walls—a hauberk, brassarts, vanbraces, gorget, greaves, a basinet and a buckler; and these, with some offensive arms—as a gisarme, a pole-axe, a *martel de fer*, a couple of swords, a cross-bow and a long bow, gave a peculiar character to the room.

It was not, however, surprising to find the weapons in Wat Tyler's dwelling, for it must be recollected that he was an armorer as well as a smith.

Nothing could be said properly to belong to Editha. She had her own little room, and it looked towards the garden.

Thither she had now retired, and kneeling before a little image of the Blessed Virgin, poured forth thanks for her fortunate deliverance.

Wat Tyler's first business was to resort to a cupboard, whence he produced a flask of wine and a couple of drinking-horns, and placing these on the table, he sat down with his confederate.

After they had solemnly pledged each other, the smith said, in a grave tone, and with a look that announced that his resolution was taken:

"Brother, after this outrage, thou wilt not wonder that I am determined no longer to delay the rising. The signal shall be given to-morrow."

"I am glad to hear it!" cried the outlaw. "Twenty thousand men are ready to rally round our standard as soon as it is raised. But in what manner will the signal be given?"

"I have not decided as yet," replied Wat. "But bring all the men you can muster to Dartford Brent by noon to-morrow. By that time I shall have arranged my plans, and be ready for action. My design is to proceed first to Canterbury, in order to release John Ball. By the time we arrive there we shall have collected all our forces. Should we meet with resistance, we will sack the city; but I believe the inhabitants will receive us well. At any rate, we will despoil the Archbishop of his treasures; and when we have got all we can, we will commence our march to London. A memorable march it shall be. Not a mansion, not a castle, shall be unvisited."

"Your thirst for vengeance is awakened, I perceive, brother," said the outlaw.

"And will not easily be allayed," replied Wat. "These tyrannous nobles, who have so long oppressed us, who grind us to the dust, and steal our wives and daughters, shall feel our power. We will exterminate them. Drink another cup to their destruction!"

"Willingly," replied the outlaw, emptying the horn which had been filled for him. "The hour of retribution is not far distant."

"It has been too long delayed," said Wat. "Had this attempt succeeded, I should have forever blamed myself for my sloth."

"'Twill serve as a pretext for the rising," observed the outlaw.

"Hark ye, brother," he continued, leaning his elbow on the table, and looking into Wat's face as he spoke; "I have a proposition to make to thee, and I doubt not thou wilt readily assent to it. I have conceived a love for thy daughter. Thou shalt give her to me as a wife."

Wat stared at him in astonishment, as if doubting whether he heard aright.

"How say'st thou?" demanded the outlaw, after a pause.

"We will talk of this hereafter," rejoined the smith. "Thou hast other matters to think of now."

"Nay, I will not be put off thus," said the outlaw, peremptorily. "I must have thy promise."

"I grieve to refuse thee," said the smith; "but I must answer, 'No!'"

"Give me thy reason for refusal," cried the outlaw, controlling himself with difficulty.

"I have no reason that I care to give," replied the smith, bluntly.

"Having imperiled my life for the damsel, I have a claim to her," cried the outlaw, with a fierce look.

"Thou hast a claim to her gratitude, but nothing more," rejoined Wat Tyler.

"By St. Nicholas! she shall be mine," cried the outlaw, springing to his feet and drawing his sword. "And since I am treated with this indignity, I will take her. I have but to wind my horn, and my men will come to my assistance."

"Not all of you shall take her from me," cried Wat. "Thou art worse than the young noble."

And stepping quickly back, he seized a sword that was hanging against the wall.

They were glaring fiercely at each other, neither liking to commence the attack, when Editha, who had heard the disturbance, came forth from the inner room.

"Away with thee, girl!" exclaimed Wat. "Thou art not wanted here. Go back into thine own room, and make fast the door."

"No; I will not quit you, father," she cried, rushing

up to him. "What is the cause of this sudden quarrel?"

"Thou art the cause of it, damsel," replied the outlaw.

"I?" she exclaimed.

"Thou hast caused the quarrel, and thou canst end it with a word," he continued. "Wilt thou share my fortunes?—wilt thou be my wife? Say 'yes,' and not twenty fathers shall keep thee from me."

"If she consents, thou shalt have my consent also," remarked Wat.

"Thou dost hear, damsel?" cried the outlaw.

"In refusing thy demand, for such it would seem to be," replied Editha, scarcely attempting to conceal the aversion with which he inspired her, "my father has done well. I am much beholden to thee for the great service thou hast rendered me; but thou wilt cancel the obligation if thou dost press thy suit."

"Enough! I have been moonstruck," cried the outlaw, sheathing his sword. "Thy pardon, damsel. I would not have thee hate me, though thou canst not love me. Thou wilt not think worse of me for this, brother," he added to Wat. "The fit is past, and will not return."

And he extended his hand to the smith, who grasped it heartily, and their reconciliation was complete.

Just then, there was a knock at the door, and next moment it was partly opened, and one of the outlaw's followers thrust in his head.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MESSER BENEDETTO IS CAPTURED BY THE ROBBERS.

"We have just stopped a mounted traveler, captain," said the robber, addressing his leader.

"Whence comes he?" demanded the outlaw.

"Only from the inn," replied the robber.

"From the inn—art sure?"

"Quite sure," returned the robber. "We saw him start. Shall we detain him?"

"It may be Messer Benedetto, the rich Lombard merchant," said Wat, to the outlaw. "If so, he would be a great prize to us at this moment."

"Let him be brought in," said the outlaw to his follower.

"Retire, daughter," said Wat to Editha, "and come not forth again, unless I summon thee."

As she disappeared, a portly personage was pushed in through the outer door, which was immediately closed behind him.

"'Tis he—'tis the Lombard merchant," observed Wat, in a low tone, to his confederate.

"Why am I thus hindered on my journey?" inquired Messer Benedetto, much alarmed by the appearance of the outlaw. "You mean me no harm, I trust?"

"You must give an account of yourself, Messer Benedetto, before I can permit you to proceed on your journey," said the outlaw. "I am an officer of justice."

"I should have thought otherwise," observed Benedetto. "Thou look'st as if thou would'st avoid all officers of justice. But how have I incurred suspicion?"

"What is your motive for setting out at this late hour from the inn," demanded the outlaw, in an authoritative voice.

"Simply the desire to arrive betimes in London to-morrow," replied Benedetto.

"But you intended to sleep at the inn," observed Wat. "You must have changed your mind suddenly."

"There is nothing wrong in that, methinks," rejoined Benedetto. "It occurred to me that I had some important business to transact to-morrow, which I had forgotten."

"Humph!" exclaimed Wat, shrugging his shoulders incredulously. "You have not omitted to leave special instructions with your tax-collector, Shaxton, I'll be sworn!"

"I have not troubled myself about him," replied Benedetto.

"It is not prudent to travel without an escort," said the outlaw. "You may fall into the hands of robbers. There are many depredators about. For a trifling fee, I and my men will see you safely on your road."

"But what surety have I that you are not leagued with robbers?" said Benedetto.

"I leagued with robbers!" exclaimed the outlaw, indignantly. "Have I not already told you I am an officer of justice? I will escort you freely for a mile; but if I go further, I and my men must be paid."

"I gladly accept your offer," said Benedetto. "Am I at liberty to depart?"

"Assuredly," replied the outlaw. "I have no desire to detain you, now that I am satisfied you have no ill design. Thou wilt see me to-morrow, at the appointed hour," he added, with a significant look at the smith. "Good night!"

He then went forth with Messer Benedetto, and called for the merchant's horse.

As it was brought, he gave some orders to his men in a low voice.

Almost immediately afterwards, the self-styled officer of justice and his unsuspecting companion were riding together side by side past the priory and on the road to London.

Any fears that Wat Tyler might have entertained as to the safety of his wife were set at rest by her appearance as soon as the outlaw and those with him had departed.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE HOUR APPROACHES.

NOTWITHSTANDING the agitation and excitement of the previous night, Editha attended matins, as usual, at the priory.

After the service, she had an interview with the Lady Superior, and told her what had occurred.

The good Prioress could scarcely repress her emo-

tion as she listened to the recital. At its close she said:

"You have, indeed, escaped a great danger, my dear child; but, as another attempt may be made by this daring young noble, you must take refuge for a time within these walls. Here you will be safe, for, unscrupulous as he is, he will not dare to commit a sacrilege."

"If my father will grant me permission, I will gladly avail myself of your offer, holy mother," said Editha, in accents of the deepest gratitude.

"Your father cannot refuse you, child," rejoined the Prioress. "He will understand the peril to which you are exposed as well as I do. Your mother, also, will perceive that precautions must be taken. Come to me early in the day. All shall be ready for you."

Accompanied by Sister Eudoxia, who was sent with her by the Prioress, Editha then returned to the village.

On the way thither they met the hermit, who was going to offer explanations to Wat, but Editha told him they were unnecessary, as her father was perfectly satisfied he had been imposed upon.

Relieved by this assurance, the good man went back to his cell.

It was a beautiful morning, and, enlivened by the sunshine, the village presented a bright and cheerful aspect.

But to those who could understand them there were indications that a storm was gathering, which might ere long burst forth.

Some groups were collected on the green, and those composing them had sullen countenances and lowering brows.

Wat Tyler was haranguing one of these assemblages, and, as he was posted on the stump of a tree, his burly frame could be distinctly seen above the heads of his auditors.

That his speech was inflammatory might be guessed from the excited gestures and murmurs of those who listened to it. At one time their murmurs rose to a roar of indignation; but the ebullition was checked by Wat.

Soon afterwards he quitted his post, and his hearers dispersed, but not till they had promised to be ready for the signal.

Drawn forth by the beauty of the morning, Chaucer had strolled out upon the green, and watched from a distance the assemblage just described. He had easily distinguished Wat Tyler, and quite comprehended the purport of his harangue. Having heard of the attempt made overnight to carry Editha off, he did not wonder at her father's indignation.

From that menacing look of the concourse as they dispersed, Chaucer was inclined to think they would soon re-assemble, and that a disturbance would then infallibly take place.

While he was thus reflecting he saw Wat Tyler coming towards him, and advanced to meet him.

"You have heard of the outrage done me?" said the smith, after a salutation had passed between them.

"I have," replied Chaucer; "and I perceive you are already taking steps to avenge it. But beware lest you proceed too far."

"As well might you attempt to arrest the bolt of heaven in its course as to stay me now," rejoined the smith, fiercely. "Be warned by me, Master Geoffrey Chaucer. Unless you mean to join the rising, set forth upon your journey without delay. I will not answer for your safety."

"Have you thought over what I said to you respecting the Duke of Lancaster?" demanded Chaucer. "Rise in his name, and I will stay with you."

"We are not for any faction, but for the establishment of our rights," rejoined Wat. "Were John of Gaunt here in person he would not obtain a single follower. But I again urge your immediate departure. Blame me not if harm befalls you."

"Is the outbreak so near at hand?" asked Chaucer.

"Question me not. Depart in peace," rejoined the other.

Chaucer, however, manifested very little uneasiness.

"I will not depart till I have bidden adieu to thy fair daughter, and congratulated her on her escape."

"Come with me then," cried Wat. "By this time she must have returned from the priory."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SIGNAL.

As they walked on, a man, noticeable for his insolent deportment and ill-favored countenance, was seen to enter the smith's cottage.

"Is that not Shaxton, the tax-collector?" remarked Chaucer.

"Ay, 'tis he," rejoined the smith, moodily. "I shall have a word with him when he comes forth. Bide here for a moment, I pray you, sir."

Suddenly a loud scream was heard from the cottage, and caused Wat to start forward; but, before he could reach the door, his wife burst forth.

"What has happened? Speak, woman!" he vociferated.

"The villain has insulted our daughter!" she rejoined.

"Ha!" ejaculated Wat, with a roar like that of a lion. And flying to the smithy, the door of which was standing open, he snatched up a heavy hammer.

Just as he appeared, armed with his formidable weapon, Shaxton came forth from the cottage, and they stood face to face.

Appalled by the smith's terrible expression of countenance, the cattiff recoiled.

But his audacity did not entirely forsake him, and he exclaimed:

"In the King's name, I charge thee to let me pass, fellow! I have but demanded my lawful tax—the damsel is over age!"

"Thou liest, villain!" cried Wat.

And lifting the hammer with both hands, he brought

it down with tremendous force on the head of the miserable wretch, crushing him to the earth.

As Shaxton dropped lifeless to the ground, Dame Tyler rushed into the cottage with a shriek; while Chaucer, horrified at the occurrence, remained transfixed to the spot.

Next moment, several other witnesses of the incident came up.

"Thou hast done well, Wat!" they cried. "The villain deserved death!"

"I have struck the blow for freedom!" he rejoined.

And rearing aloft the blood-stained hammer, and setting his foot on the body of the wretch he had slain, he shouted, in a stentorian voice, "Liberty!"

The cry awakened a hundred echoes. Shouts of "Liberty!" resounded on all sides.

The signal had been given, and answered.

As if by magic, some two hundred insurgents appeared before the smith's dwelling.

They were all provided with weapons of various kinds—clubs, pole-axes, gisarnes, scythe blades, or blades like a hedging-bill, glaives, pikes, swords, two-handed swords, broad-bladed daggers, bows, cross-bows, and slings. Some few wore parts of armor—old hauberks, leather jacks, and scull-caps; but these were the exceptions.

Mark Cleaver, the butcher, was armed with a falchion, with which he hacked off Shaxton's head, and stuck it on a pike.

As he held it up, a ferocious shout arose from the beholders.

At the commencement of this tumultuous scene, Chaucer endeavored to make his escape; but he was captured by Elias Liripipe and Grouthead, each of whom was provided with a sword, besides smaller weapons. They detained him, till their leader's pleasure should be ascertained.

Meanwhile, Wat had entered his dwelling, and hastily donned a breastplate and skull-cap; arming himself, at the same time, with a sword and a dagger.

While thus employed, he called for his daughter; but she came not. However, he learned from his wife, who appeared from the inner room, looking terribly frightened, that Editha had flown with Sister Eudoxia to the priory.

"It is well," observed Wat. "I meant to send her thither. Do you take refuge there likewise."

"Nay; I will not quit this cottage!" she rejoined. "Oh, Wat!" she added, grasping his arm, and striving to hold him back, "thou art going to thy destruction!"

"I cannot turn back, if I would!" he rejoined, sternly, and with an expression such as she had never before seen in his countenance. "My work is already begun! A week hence, no name in England will be so much dreaded as mine! Fare thee well!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE INSURGENTS MARCH OUT OF DARTFORD.

WHEN Wat came forth, he found that a fully-equipped steed had been brought him by one of the minstrels, who had thrown off his disguise.

As he sprang into the saddle, a loud shout greeted him. Waving his sword to the assemblage, he called out:

"Brothers! let us march to deliver our country from oppression! Our cry will be, 'St. George for Merry England!'"

"Ay, England will soon be 'Merry England' once more," responded several voices.

"I much fear not," thought Chaucer.

The poet then besought his captors to take him to their leader, and they complied; but Wat, who had now assumed a tone and look of authority, refused to liberate him.

"'Tis your own fault that you are a prisoner, Master Chaucer," he said. "I shall detain you as a hostage."

"At least, let me have my horse," said the poet.

"Pledge me your word that you will not attempt to escape, and the request shall be granted—not otherwise," rejoined Wat.

The pledge being given, he continued:

"We shall halt for awhile near the inn, and then your horse shall be brought you."

"Now follow me!" he vociferated, putting himself at the head of the insurgents.

Shouting loudly, and brandishing their weapons, the whole party then began to march towards the center of the village.

About twenty paces in front of the mounted leader strode Mark Cleaver, bearing Shaxton's head on a pike.

A sort of body-guard to Wat was formed by four individuals, who, from their strange arms and accoutrements, presented a very grotesque appearance.

Two of these were Crispin Curthose, the shoemaker, who had put on an old piece of armor of Edward the Second's time, and Peter Crust, the baker, who was furnished with a pair of gauntlets, a battered helmet, and a pole-axe; the other two were Elias Liripipe and Josbert Grouthead.

Behind marched Chaucer, with a guard on either side of him.

The progress of the insurgents was intentionally slow, for they felt sure their numbers would be increased.

Nor were they disappointed. Partly from fear, partly from goodwill to the cause, the villagers received them enthusiastically.

Ere long, another hundred men had joined the party; but as most of these were unarmed, they were sent to collect all the weapons of every kind that could be found in the village, with a tolerably satisfactory result.

When the insurgents halted opposite the inn, Baldock, who was expecting their arrival, stepped forward, and saluting the leader deferentially, offered him and his followers the best liquors his house could furnish.

"Thou dost not expect payment, Baldock?" said Crispin Curthose.

"Payment—no!" quoth the host; "I am too happy to supply you."

"Bring a flask of malvoisie, then, and four drinking-cups," said Curthose, authoritatively.

"Your worship shall be obeyed," replied Baldock, bowing.

"Call me not 'worship,'" said Curthose. "I am one of the people. Henceforward there will be no distinctions. All men will be equal. The shoemaker will be as good as he for whom he worketh."

"Or rather, no more shoes and jerkins will be made," said Liripipe.

"And no more bread will be baked—at least by me," said Peter Crust.

"Then we must go barefooted, and uncovered, and I shall soon be bareboned," observed Baldock. "Since all are to be equal, and I may not have enough for the whole assemblage, will it please you to drink wine or mead?"

"Beshrew thee for a knave!" cried Grouthead, fiercely. "We have drank ale and mead long enough. Naught but the choicest wines will serve our turn now. Bring the malvoisie without more ado."

"Go, broach a cask of ale, Baldock—that will suffice," interrupted Wat Tyler, authoritatively. "And, hark ye!" he added; "let Master Chaucer's horse be brought forth at once from the stable."

"Hath Master Chaucer joined you?" cried the host, in surprise?

"Not of his own free will," said the poet. "Bear record of that, good Baldock."

The host hurried to execute the orders he had received; and fearing that his present customers would help themselves if there was any stint, he caused them to be abundantly supplied with ale—a cask being quickly broached for that purpose, as suggested by Wat.

Chaucer's horse was likewise brought from the stable, and the poet felt much more at ease when he was again in the saddle.

After half an hour's delay, during which there were further additions to the insurrectionary party, Wat Tyler became impatient to set off; and he was therefore well pleased when a mounted messenger galloped into the village, and informed him that his brother chief awaited him, with a large body of men on Dartford Brent.

On receiving this satisfactory intelligence, Wat immediately gave the word to march, and the party set forth in the same order as before; but making rather more noise, in consequence of the strong ale they had drunk.

All the old men, women, and children, who were left in the village, bade them adieu. The priests belonging to St. Edmund's Chapel likewise came forth to look at them, but bestowed no blessing on the expedition.

Mark Cleaver still continued in front, but, on crossing the Darent, he planted the pike, on which the wretched collector's head was fixed, in the center of the little wooden bridge, and there it remained for many a day, a ghastly memorial of what had occurred.

Shaxton's body was cast into a ditch, for the clergy refused it Christian burial.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE MARCH TO ROCHESTER.

As soon as Wat Tyler and his party appeared on the brow of Dartford Hill, a loud shout arose from another body of insurgents, who were waiting for them at a short distance on the plain.

At the same time, the outlaw, who was at the head of this second party, galloped forward to meet Wat, and offer him his congratulations.

As the two leaders rode on together, they held a brief council, during which they decided to march on at once to Rochester, where Jack Straw affirmed they were certain to be well received by the inhabitants, and must necessarily obtain a large accession of force.

This being agreed upon, as soon as the two bodies of insurgents had met and fraternized, they set off across the plain, following the course of the old Roman Road, known as the Watling Street.

Jack Straw's party was not so numerous as that of his brother chief, but several of the men were mounted, and this was a great advantage, since they could act as emissaries. Two of them, indeed, were sent on to Rochester, and others were despatched to different little villages on the road, to inform the inhabitants that the rising had taken place.

The outlaw had a prisoner, for whom he expected a large ransom.

This was Messer Benedetto.

Instead of escorting him on the road to London, he had taken him into the forest, where the luckless Lombard merchant was compelled to pass the night, and he was now guarded by two of the band. To add to his disquietude, he had just heard of Shaxton's direful end.

Under these circumstances, it was some little comfort to him to meet with a friend; and when the two insurgent parties combined their forces, he and Chaucer were allowed to ride together.

It was a strange sight to see this wild rout of peasants, armed and accoutered in the strange manner described, and commanded by leaders wild as themselves, sweep like a dark, ominous cloud, across the sunny plain; and those who watched the course of the cloud, could not doubt that it boded destruction.

Ever and anon came other peasants, armed with scythes, to swell the ranks, and these recruits were received with shouts.

No one gazed at it, no one even thought of it, and yet the prospect from that plain on that brilliant day was enchanting. There, at the foot of the hill, was the broad, winding river, glittering in the sunshine, with the picturesque Essex shore. There were Greenhithe and Swanscombe, Southfleet and Northfleet, yet none

looked towards them, unless it might be Chaucer and Benedetto.

Ere long, however, the bright prospect was completely lost to sight, for the insurgents plunged into a forest so dense and intricate, that none but the outlaw and his band could have guided them safely through it.

So thick were the trees, that the sunbeams could not penetrate between the branches, and the wood was somber even on that splendid day.

For nearly two hours the insurgents were involved in the wood, and when they came forth, Rochester, with its towering castle, then in its full strength and grandeur, lay beneath them, about a mile off.

Here the two chiefs ordered a halt till their emissaries returned; but they were soon made easy in regard to them, for as they looked towards the town, a party of horsemen was seen to cross the bridge over the Medway, and ascend the hill on which the insurgents were stationed.

With this troop were the two messengers.

Satisfied, therefore, that no hostile design was intended, the insurgents marched on to meet their confederates, and were enthusiastically welcomed.

Hothbrand Corbrigg, the leader of the party, lauded Wat Tyler for the bold step he had taken, and assured him that the people of Rochester were all favorable to the cause.

"Fear not to enter the town," he said, "but come with us, and we will make you all heartily welcome; and since, as we understand, you intend to proceed to Canterbury to-morrow, many of us will go with you."

"But what of the constable of the castle?" said Wat. "Sir John de Newtoun is devoted to the King; and when he sees us enter Rochester, he will suspect our design, and demand that we be delivered up to him."

"Sir John de Newtoun is a brave knight," replied Hothbrand; "but he hath had too much experience of the people of Rochester to trouble them, unless they molest him. While you are under our safeguard, he will allow you to tarry within the town as long as you list, and to depart peaceably."

"On our return from Canterbury, when we have received all the reinforcements we expect, we will summon the constable to surrender the castle," said the outlaw. "If he refuses, we will besiege him."

"We will help you," rejoined Hothbrand. "And though Rochester Castle is deemed impregnable, it can be taken by surprise, as we will prove to you."

They then descended the hill, and proceeded towards the town.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FROM ROCHESTER TO HARBLEDOWN.

The approach of the insurgents was watched by armed men from the walls and towers of the castle; but as Hothbrand rode between the two rebel leaders, and as the town's-people were preparing to give them welcome, no attempt to interfere was made by the garrison.

At that time, the bridge across the Medway was built of wood, though, a few years afterwards, it was superseded by one of stone, that endured to the present century.

The earlier bridge, with which we are concerned, was defended by a strong wooden tower and great gates; but the tower being now occupied by friends, and the gates thrown wide open, the insurgents marched into the town triumphantly, and were hailed by the inhabitants as deliverers of the country.

Well-lodged and feasted, they made themselves merry; but the leaders to care took prevent their followers from committing any excesses.

While their captors were feasting and reveling, Chaucer and Benedetto were locked up in a tower. However, they were well supplied with eatables and wine.

At night, a great meeting was held in the marketplace, at which it was resolved that a party, under the command of Hothbrand, should proceed on the morrow to Maidstone, and after collecting all the auxiliaries they could in that town, should march to Canterbury, and join Wat Tyler and his host.

Accordingly, next morning, soon after daybreak, Hothbrand, attended by some thirty horsemen, set off on his mission.

Somewhat later, the populace began to assemble, and great numbers having agreed to accompany the insurgents to Canterbury, the two leaders at length sallied forth, at the head of a vast horde, and took the way to Sittingbourne.

The Rochester men greatly outnumbered those of Dartford, but there was no rivalry or jealousy among the two parties; both being bound in the same confederacy, and though the new recruits had captains of their own, they all acknowledged Wat Tyler and Jack Straw as their leaders.

Most of the Rochester men were on foot, some few were on horseback. An important addition had, however, been made to the rebel force by a band of archers.

Had it not been for these Sir John de Newtoun, the constable of the castle, would have attacked them, as they quitted the town.

The two prisoners, who had hoped they might be left behind, were taken on.

Nothing particular occurred during the march to Sittingbourne, but on the arrival of the insurgents at that ancient town, they were enthusiastically received by the inhabitants, and the two leaders and the numerous captains were feasted at the famous old hotel, the "Red Lion."

On this occasion, Chaucer and his fellow captives were allowed to partake of the feast.

Their forces being largely increased at Sittingbourne, the insurgents next proceeded to Faversham, where they halted for the night, and took possession of the abbey, to the great discomfort of the monks.

Next morning they were joined by Hothbrand with three hundred men on horseback from Maidstone.

Ever since the outbreak the weather had been splendid, and the day on which the rebel host set out from Faversham to Canterbury was as fine as those that had preceded it.

As they went on, more peasants joined them from Ospringe and other places, "leaving all their business," says the good old chronicler Holinshed, "letting plough and cart stand, forsaking wife, children, and houses."

The insurgents then went a little out of their way to mount Boughton Hill, from the summit of which a magnificent prospect was obtained, including not only the Swale and the Isle of Sheppey, with a glittering expanse of sea, but the ancient city towards which they were marching.

From this eminence, the golden angel, which then crowned the great lofty spire of the cathedral (the cathedral then had a spire, be it noted), and was regarded with much reverence by pilgrims, could be distinctly seen; and as the insurgent leaders, who were not devoid of superstition, gazed at it, they thought that the figure had a flaming torch in its hand, and beckoned them on to burn and ravage.

From Boughton Hill the vast forest of Blean extended almost to Canterbury, and having satiated themselves with the splendid view we have described, the insurgents took a narrow road that led through the wood, and did not re-appear till they reached Harbledown.

The venerable pile now burst upon them in all its grandeur. But the aspect of the golden angel on the spire seemed changed. Frowns clothed its brow, and instead of beckoning them on, it signed to them to retire.

Such, at least, was the notion of some of those who gazed at it.

Part of the old walls on this side of the city, together with the west gate, had been recently rebuilt by Simon de Sudbury, then Archbishop of Canterbury, so that they formed a striking contrast to the ancient habitations near them.

While the insurgents were marching towards the city, though still under cover of the wood, a splendid cavalcade of nobles, knights, and dames, attended by an escort of armed men, issued from the gate just mentioned, quite unconscious of the danger they were exposed to.

It was the Princess of Wales and her train, returning from the pilgrimage. They had not gone very far when a loud shout startled them, and the rebel host burst from the wood.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE REBEL CHIEFS HOLD A CONFERENCE WITH THE PRINCESS.

At the sight of the insurgents, Sir John Holland, who was near the Princess, urged her to ride back to the city as fast as she could, but, with extraordinary spirit, she refused, saying:

"I will speak to these men. I am not afraid of them. They will do me no harm."

"You know not what you do, madam!" cried Sir John, who had recognized the two insurgent leaders, and well knew he had no mercy to expect from them. "You will sacrifice us all. What can we do against that infuriated rabble?"

"Leave them to me!" replied his mother, undauntedly. "I feel sure I can pacify them, but not if you are with me, for you are the special object of their dislike. My ladies will stay with me."

"We will," they cried, pressing towards her.

"Fly instantly, I command you!" cried the Princess, authoritatively, to her son. "You will only endanger my safety. Take all the nobles and knights with you, but leave the armed escort with me."

"You hear what the Princess says, my lord?" exclaimed Sir John. "Shall we obey her?"

"We must!" replied Sir Osbert Montacute.

Most reluctantly did Sir John, with the whole of the nobles, knights, and esquires, ride back towards the city, leaving the courageous Princess undefended, except by the armed escort.

Sir John and his party did not, however, enter the city, but drew up about a bow-shot from the west gate, to await the result.

Meantime, the summit of the gate was crowded with armed men, and others appeared on the watch-towers, but none of them showed any disposition to take part against the rebels.

Surrounded by her ladies, with her confessor, her physician, her almoner, her pages, the Princess calmly awaited the approach of the insurgents.

When they came up, the two leaders motioned back their followers, and advanced towards her.

Awed by her majestic looks and deportment, both the fierce men felt compelled to show her a certain deference.

"Why do I see you in this warlike array, my good friends?" demanded the Princess, in a firm, yet conciliatory tone.

"That which I hinted to your Grace at Dartmouth hath come to pass," rejoined Wat Tyler. "The people have risen to obtain their rights. Nor will they retire till their just demands shall be granted by the King, your son."

"I cannot confer with men in open rebellion against their Sovereign," said the Princess. "Lay down your arms and I will willingly listen to you, and represent your grievances to the King."

These words, pronounced in a loud voice, were followed by murmurs from those who heard them.

"Princess," said Wat Tyler, sternly, "this is idle talk. Having taken up arms, we shall not lay them down till our object be attained. Of that be sure. Knowing you are a good and gracious lady, and mean the people well, we have consented to this conference. But 'tis useless

to prolong it, since it is plain it can come to nothing. Were it our pleasure, we could detain you."

"Detain me!" exclaimed the Princess.

"Alarm not yourself, madam; we have no such intent. You are free to pass on with your ladies, your personal attendants, and your escort. Tell the King what you have seen and heard. That is all we ask."

"Your Grace cannot re-enter Canterbury," said the outlaw, seeing her glance in that direction.

"May I not take my retinue with me?" she inquired.

"No," rejoined Wat Tyler. "And if Sir John Holland falls into our hands, we will put him to death!"

"You will not advance your cause by cruelty," said the Princess. "A word ere I depart. You have a prisoner with you, I perceive—Master Geoffrey Chaucer. Have you fixed upon his ransom?"

"Ay; a thousand crowns," replied Wat Tyler.

"There is double the sum in this purse," said the Princess. "Take it, and let him come with me."

As Wat received the richly-embroidered purse from the hand of the Princess, he told the poet he was free.

Chaucer could only express his gratitude at the moment by a profound obeisance to the gracious lady who had effected his liberation.

Encouraged by what had taken place, Messer Benedetto thus besought the Princess.

"I pray you intercede for me, gracious madam. I am willing to pay a heavy ransom!"

"'Tis Messer Benedetto, the Lombard merchant," said the outlaw. "He is rich enough to pay a thousand marks for his ransom; and, by St. Nicholas! I will not set him free for less."

"How say you, Messer Benedetto?" asked the Princess. "Will you pledge your word to me that you will pay the amount?"

"I will, gracious madam," he rejoined, "provided I be allowed to depart with your Highness."

"Enough!" cried the outlaw.

And the merchant was forthwith released, and took up a position beside Chaucer at the rear of the Princess's attendants.

Riding in front, and calling out authoritatively to the peasants to stand back, the two leaders forced a passage for the Princess and those with her through the insurgent host. They were aided in the difficult task by Hothbrand and some others.

The intrepid lady showed no signs of fear at the scowling glances fixed upon her, or at the various weapons bristling around her; but her damsels did not display quite so much courage.

Even the confessor, the physician, and the pages were greatly alarmed.

The armed escort glared fiercely at the threatening crowd, and shook their fists at them. More than once a conflict seemed imminent, but it was prevented by the exertions of Hothbrand.

When Wat Tyler and the outlaw had conducted the Princess safely through the tumultuous horde, they retired, and she rode off at a quick pace with her attendants.

At the same time, Sir John Holland, and the nobles and knights with him, who had witnessed the scene just described turned round, and dashed through the West gate.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SIR JOHN HOLLAND AND HIS COMPANIONS TAKE REFUGE IN THE ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE.

No sooner were they inside, than Sir John called to the guard to close the gate, and sound to arms; but, to his astonishment and rage, the guard refused to obey the order, saying they would not close the gate against friends and brothers.

"Friends and brothers!" exclaimed Sir John, furiously. "They are rebels and traitors! Would ye deliver the city to them? Do my bidding instantly, or I will cause you to be hanged for treacherous villains, as ye are!"

But the guard remained perfectly unmoved by the young noble's anger and threats.

Meantime, several citizens had come up, and one of them called out to the young nobles:

"Begone, if you would save your lives! Hear you not yon shouts?—see you not yon people hurrying hither? If you are caught you will be slain, or delivered to your enemies! Fly, while there is yet time!"

"My lord, it is true!" cried Sir Osbert. "A large concourse is coming along the street, and they are evidently friends of the rebels. If we stay here, we shall be caught between two fires!"

"Forward then, in the King's name!" cried Sir John, drawing his sword. "We will hew our way through the rebellious rascals if they oppose us!"

With this, he struck spurs into his charger, and, followed by his companions, galloped along the street.

Such was the impetuosity of their career, that the citizens, though many of them were armed, made way, fearful of being trampled under foot.

Still maintaining their furious pace, and carrying terror with them, Sir John and his party rode past the cathedral to the other side of the city.

On reaching the east gate, where they meant to make an exit, they found it shut and strongly guarded.

Cross-bowmen were on the summit, and a shower of iron bolts would have been launched against them had they not withdrawn.

They then rode to the Burgate, but it was likewise closed; and doubtless all the other gates were shut.

Hitherto everything had betokened that the people were hostile to the young nobles and friendly to the insurgents, who by this time must have entered the city.

The peril, therefore, was very great, and a place of refuge must be instantly found. There were several monasteries; but the priors might be unwilling to receive them.

In this emergency, Sir Osbert Montacute proposed

that they should return to the Archbishop's palace, where the Princess of Wales had been lodged during her stay at Canterbury, and Sir John approving of the suggestion, they galloped off at once to the palace.

It was a magnificent edifice, built by Lanfranc, which had been inhabited by Becket, and being surrounded by high walls, was capable of defense. In fact, it had been more than once maintained against the turbulent citizens.

When they stopped at the arched entrance, which still exists in Palace Street, the porter immediately summoned old Michael Siward, the seneschal, who, on learning that the city was beset by rebels, and that the populace were friendly to them, was filled with indignation.

"Would that his Grace were here!" he exclaimed. "He would speak to the people, and bring them to their duty. But I will do the best I can for your protection. Enter, I pray you, noble sirs."

Thereupon the gate was thrown open, and made fast again as soon as the whole party had ridden into the courtyard.

"You are safe now, I trust, Sir John," said Siward. "I cannot think that the rebels will dare to attack the palace; but should they do so, we will defend it to the last."

After warmly thanking the seneschal for his zeal in their behalf, Sir John and his companions dismounted, and their horses were taken to the stables, which were at the further end of the courtyard.

By this time most of the household—several of whom were armed—had assembled in the courtyard, and after giving them some orders, Siward asked Sir John if he should conduct him and his friends to the great hall.

"I thank thee, no, good friend," replied Sir John. "We will remain here for the present to see what betides. To judge from the shouting and noise in the street, the rebels must have discovered that we have taken refuge in the palace, and are coming hither to demand that we be delivered up to them."

"Should the audacious demand be made, my reply will be that your lordship and those with you are under the safeguard of the Archbishop," said the seneschal; "and since his Grace would never yield you up, neither will I. If they be not content with that response, they shall have a wherewithal to satisfy them," he added, significantly.

Sir John and the others laughed heartily at this speech of the stout old man.

"I doubt not we shall be able to hold out against them," pursued the seneschal; "but come what will, I engage that your lordship shall never fall into their hands."

"I have perfect faith in thee, my good friend," said Sir John.

"Then you will not think I am deserting my post if I leave you for awhile," said Siward. "The cathedral must not be neglected. Should those sacrilegious villains gain an entrance, they would not hesitate to carry off the treasures of the shrine."

"Thou art right," cried Sir John. "Go see that all needful precautions are taken to protect the shrine."

CHAPTER XXXII.

FRIAR NOSROCK AND THE BAN-DOGS.

AFTER reiterating his orders to the household, all of whom promised implicit obedience to his injunctions, the seneschal hurried off to the back of the palace, and unlocking the door in the walls, entered the cloisters, through which he quickly passed, thus pursuing the precise course taken by the sainted Becket when he fled from the murderous knights.

In another moment Siward was in the splendid north transept, and gazing anxiously down the magnificent nave, but beheld only a few priests and monks pacing along the aisles, with here and there a devotee kneeling at a shrine—nothing to alarm him.

He then turned towards the choir, but no irreverent intruders could be distinguished; and, satisfied he was in time to prevent any desecration of the sacred pile, he went round and caused all the doors to be locked, strictly enjoining the vergers to allow no one to enter the cathedral, and to send out all persons then within the building through the cloisters.

Having taken these precautions, he repaired to the chapel of the Holy Trinity, where was the shrine of St. Thomas a Becket, the riches of which he feared would excite the cupidity of the rebels.

Many pilgrims were kneeling on the well-worn pavement before the shrine; but he did not disturb them, his object being to see Friar Nosrock, a monk, who occupied a watching-chamber above the chapel.

The window of this chamber commanded Becket's gorgeous shrine, and Friar Nosrock's business was to see that none of the priceless jewels adorning it were appropriated by pretended pilgrims, and so well did he perform his office, that not a single gem had been stolen.

The vigilant monk was provided with a dozen band-dogs—huge and fierce mastiffs—which he could let loose should any nocturnal attempt be made at depredation upon the shrine.

Moreover, he had the means of ringing an alarm-bell.

In Friar Nosrock's chamber an illustrious prisoner had been confined—namely, King John of France.

The sudden manner in which Siward entered his chamber somewhat startled the monk.

"What wouldst thou, brother?" he asked.

"I am come to warn thee to look well after the shrine," replied the seneschal. "The cathedral is in danger."

"The cathedral in danger! Holy Thomas? From whom?" exclaimed the monk, horror-stricken.

"From rebels and traitors," replied Siward. "An insurrection hath broken out among the peasantry. They

have come to Canterbury in great numbers; and, instead of driving them hence, the foolish citizens have admitted them."

"Tis all John Ball's doing!" cried Friar Nosrock. "He has stirred up the people to this point. The Archbishop ought to have hanged him."

"Very true," said Siward. "The Wyckliffites are numerous in the city, I fear, and will take advantage of this outbreak to do all the mischief they can. The rebels are threatening the palace, where Sir John Holland and several young nobles and knights, who accompanied the Princess in her pilgrimage, have taken refuge."

"Only this very morn I beheld the Princess kneeling before the shrine," said the friar. "I trust her Grace hath escaped the ribald crew?"

"Ay, she has got off, but her son and his companions are in some danger, as I have told thee. I must now go back to the palace, and see to its defense. Do thou take care of the shrine."

"Rely on me, good master seneschal, replied the monk. "Should the rebels come here, I will let loose the ban-dogs, and I warrant thee they will make havoc among the ribalds. They had better contend with a legion of fiends than with those fierce hounds," he added, with an ill-suppressed laugh.

"Hark thee, holy brother," said Siward. "We may be driven by numbers from the palace. In that event we shall seek refuge in the cathedral. Wilt thou give Sir John Holland and his friends a lodging in thy chamber?"

"Willingly," replied the monk. Well satisfied with the promise, the seneschal departed.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE HOSTEL IN MERCERY LANE.

MEANWHILE the whole of the insurgents had entered the city; and though strict orders were given by the leaders that the different parties of which the host was composed should keep together, the tumultuous peasantry could not be restrained, but spread about in every direction.

The main body, however, of the rebels, headed by Wat Tyler and the outlaw, marched along the High Street, amid the shouts of the populace, who were quite as enthusiastic in their demonstrations as the people of Rochester had been.

The first object of the leaders was to liberate John Ball, and with that view they were proceeding to the barbacan; but they were spared the trouble; for before they reached the center of the city, loud shouts, coming from the opposite direction, informed them that the monk was free; and they presently beheld him riding on a mule, at the head of a vast multitude.

With him, on horseback, were a brewer named Richard Basset, and his son, Conrad, both Wyckliffites, who had accomplished his liberation.

A joyous meeting took place between the monk and his confederates, and after they had exchanged greetings and congratulations, John Ball, who was anxious to address the people, proposed that they should repair to the Rush Market.

Intimation to this effect having been given, the vast concourse began to move towards the appointed spot. To reach it they had to proceed along a picturesque thoroughfare, called Mercery Lane, which was full of shops and stalls, where, amongst other matters, leaden brooches, stamped with the mitred head of the martyred saint, Thomas a Becket, were sold to the pilgrims. In Mercery Lane was situated the large hostel, rendered ever famous by Chaucer, and known as the "Chequers of the Hope."

Built of massive timber, this vast caravansaray contained a long upper chamber, approached by stairs from the outside, and known as the "Dormitory of the Hundred Beds." So numerous were the bands of pilgrims to the shrine of St. Thomas, that not a bed was ever unoccupied.

Besides this grand dormitory, accounted a wonder at the time, the vast building had a refectory to correspond, and a spacious court into which the pilgrims could ride on their arrival in the city.

While the shouting concourse poured down Mercery Lane to hear John Ball's address, Curthose, Liripipe, Mark Cleaver, Grouthead, Peter Crust, and others of the Dartford men, who now exercised a sort of authority in the insurgent army, turned into the court of the "Chequers."

The place was crowded with pilgrims, all of whom were much alarmed by what was going on; but the Dartford men soon discovered the host, Nicholas Chilham, and told him, in a peremptory tone, that they meant to lodge at the "Chequers" that night, and should require the whole of the hundred beds for themselves and their comrades.

In vain Master Chilham protested that the entire dormitory was engaged. That mattered not to the Dartford heroes. They must be accommodated. All the other guests must turn out, and seek quarters elsewhere. Moreover, Master Chilham must provide a good supper for a hundred persons.

Fearing he might have a whole host quartered upon him if he refused, the landlord promised compliance.

At the farther end of the Rush Market stood a large cross, painted and gilt, and, stationing himself in front of it, with an insurgent leader on either side, John Ball proceeded to address the concourse, which entirely filled the place. The assemblage was partly composed of insurgent peasants, partly of citizens.

It was in one of those fierce and inflammatory harangues which he had previously found so successful that the monk attempted to justify the outbreak, by showing that the people had been treated like slaves, and were forced to throw off the yoke; but his chief attack was directed against the Archbishop of Canterbury, and he declared that neither the King nor the kingdom ought to submit to any episcopal see. Above

all, no bishop or other ecclesiastic ought to hold an important civil office.

"As Chancellor of England," he vociferated, "Simon de Sudbury has betrayed his Sovereign, and violated the rights of the people, and he therefore deserves death."

"He shall die the death of a traitor!" cried Wat Tyler, in a loud voice. "Would we had him here!"

"We will behead him, and make thee Archbishop in his stead!" shouted several persons to John Ball.

"Were it in your power to make me Pope of Rome, I would refuse," rejoined the monk. "Like my master, John Wycliffe, I have ever preached the abolition of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and my actions shall not belie my words."

Violent cries then rose from the assemblage, and many persons called out, "Let us sack the cathedral!"

"Hold!" exclaimed Wat Tyler, in a stentorian voice. "I forbid you to enter the cathedral for any such purposes!"

Some murmurs arose; but they instantly ceased, as Wat continued, "Since you want pillage, you shall have it. The Archbishop has robbed the people, and 'tis meet that his palace should be plundered in return. Go thither!"

"To the palace! to the palace!" shouted a hundred voices.

At this juncture, Conrad Basset, the brewer's son, called out, "Sir John Holland and the party of young nobles and knights in attendance on the Princess of Wales have taken refuge in the palace. What shall we do with them?"

"Slay them!" cried Wat. "They are a brood of vipers that ought to be crushed!"

Prepared to execute this ferocious mandate, the concourse hurried back through Chancery Lane, and proceeded to the palace.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE SIEGE OF THE ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE.

LOUD blows dealt against the gates of the Archbishop's Palace, warned those in the court that the rebellious concourse were endeavoring to break in, whereupon Siward, who had just returned from the cathedral, accompanied by half a dozen of the household, armed with crossbows and pikes, mounted to the top of a turret that flanked the walls, and called out to the assailants to be gone.

But as the insurgents took no heed, the cross-bowmen shot their bolts at them, and three or four were stricken down.

This occasioned a pause; but in another minute the attack was renewed, and huge stones were hurled against the gate, but being of stout oak, it resisted all their efforts. Again the cross-bowmen endeavored to drive back the assailants, but they themselves had now become the mark for some archers, who were mingled with the multitude, and were obliged to seek a less exposed position.

Siward alone remained on the top of the turret, and as the shafts flew quickly past him, he tranquilly adjusted his cross-bow, and smote a man who was planting a scaling-ladder against the wall.

At this juncture, the two insurgent leaders appeared among the concourse, and John Ball, who was with them on his mule, forced his way through the throng towards the gate, and, holding up his hand to enjoin a brief suspension of hostilities, thus bespoke the brave old seneschal:

"I know thee well, Siward," he said; "and would not thou shouldst come to harm. It must be plain to thee that thou canst not hold out against this determined multitude. Open the gates, therefore, and let us in, and I will undertake that thy life, and the lives of all the household, shall be spared."

"Aught more?" inquired Siward, in a taunting tone.

"Ay, this," cried Wat Tyler, who had now come up. "We require that Sir John Holland, and the party of licentious young nobles who have taken refuge here, be delivered up to us, that justice be done upon them."

"Tis not for thee and thine to judge them," said Siward, scornfully. "Now hear me! I am left in charge of my master's house, and will never surrender it to robbers; neither will I deliver up noble and valiant gentlemen to be murdered by vile ribalds!"

The extreme boldness with which these words were uttered, kept the hearers quiet, and the seneschal went on with unabated courage.

"As to thee, thou renegade priest," he said, addressing John Ball, "who has stirred up all this mischief, I would his Grace had hanged thee! But I will put it out of thy power to do further ill!"

And as he spoke, he raised his arbalest quickly to his shoulder and let fly a bolt at the monk, which struck his cowl, but did not injure him.

"Thou wert not born to kill me," laughed John Ball as he took out the iron-headed dart.

Next moment a flight of arrows passed over the turret where the seneschal had stood, but he was gone.

Redoubled efforts were now made by the insurgents to take the palace.

As it seemed a waste of time to batter against the door, scaling-ladders were planted against the high embattled walls, and up each of these half a dozen men climbed; but no sooner did they reach the embrasures than they were hurled back.

The defending force, among whom were Sir John Holland and the young nobles, were fully prepared for them, and for some time not a single assailant was able to set foot on the battlements.

But it was quite clear the place could not hold out against such a host, and it behooved those inside to provide for their safety by a timely retreat, for no one thought of a surrender.

Accordingly, when the battlements had been cleared of the few who had gained them, and the swarm of fresh assailants had been shaken off the ladders, advantage

was taken by Siward, who had previously apprized them of his design, to hurry off Sir John Holland and his party to the cloisters.

Thither they were followed by the whole household, for no one desired to be left to the mercy of the rebels; and the door being made behind them, they all sought shelter in the cathedral, the entrance from the cloisters being carefully secured.

The seneschal alone returned to the palace, fully resolved not to leave it till the last.

It being quickly discovered that the defenders had retired, the assailants therefore sprang upon the battlements, and, shouting to their friends that the palace was won, proceeded to throw open the portal, and in another minute the rebel leaders rode into the court.

No restraint being put upon them by their leaders, the insurgents rushed into the palace and commenced the work of destruction and spoilage.

Determined, however, to prevent the desecration of the cathedral, Wat Tyler placed a strong guard at the entrance to the cloisters, giving the men strict injunctions to allow no one to pass without his express order.

He then dismounted, and, accompanied by John Ball and the outlaw, entered the great hall of the palace—a noble apartment, with a richly-carved screen, a fine gallery, and a grand oak ceiling. Moreover, the hall was adorned by several fine paintings.

In this magnificent banquetting-hall kings had been entertained with almost regal splendor and hospitality, and in it the Princess of Wales dined daily with her suite during her stay at the palace.

Alas! it was now invaded by a furious throng, who, having hastily ransacked the other apartments, were piling the valuables on the tables or throwing them on the floor, in order to carry them off more readily.

Here were great silver flagons and cups, pieces of plate, rich vestments, curtains and tapestry, torn down from beds and walls; coffers, chests, chairs, and pieces of furniture that could be carried off, and a hundred articles besides that cannot be enumerated.

"The chancellor got this chair too cheap," cried one of the plunderers.

"Ay, he made us pay for it, as he did for this silver drinking-cup," added another. "Ours they are by rights, and we will have them."

On a dais at the upper end of the hall, and covered by a rich canopy, was the archbishop's throne. In order to proclaim his authority, Wat Tyler marched thither, and ascending the platform, seated himself on the throne; while John Ball took a place on his right and the outlaw on his left.

From this elevated spot the three leaders surveyed the lawless proceedings of the throng, but did not choose to interfere.

While they were thus gazing around they perceived a prisoner had just been brought into the hall.

It was the seneschal, who had been seized by Conrad Basset while endeavoring to preserve some valuables from the plunderers.

When he was recognized the crowd would have laid violent hands upon him, but Conrad kept them back, insisting that he should be taken before Wat Tyler for judgment.

His arms being fastened behind his back by a belt, so that he could offer no resistance, the prisoner was dragged to the upper end of the hall, amid the threats and outcries of the assemblage.

A terrible sight greeted him. There, on the Archbishop's throne, sat Wat Tyler, leaning upon his sword, with his foot on a stool. Beside him were the rebel monk and the outlaw.

With such judges, Siward knew that his doom was sealed; nevertheless, he maintained a firm demeanor.

Conrad and his captors now stepped back and left him standing alone.

At this moment the wild uproar hitherto prevailing in the hall suddenly ceased. Amid this awful hush Wat Tyler's stern voice was heard.

"Thou art Michael Siward, seneschal or steward to Simon de Sudbury, art thou not?" demanded the rebel leader.

"I am chief officer of the household of his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is likewise Lord High Chancellor of England," replied Siward, boldly.

"Then thou art servant to one who has plundered the people," said Wat Tyler, yet more sternly. "Thy master will have to give us an account of the revenues of England, and of the large sums he has levied since the King's coronation."

"The Chancellor will render no account to such vile wretches as you!" rejoined the steward. "Were his Grace in your power, which, thank heaven, he is not, he would treat you with as much scorn as I do. Wreak your vengeance on me, if you will, but rest assured that a day of retribution will arrive."

"Thou speakest boldly, Siward," said John Ball. "Such a man as thou art might be of service to our righteous cause. Bear testimony against thy master, and thy life shall be spared."

"I will testify with my latest breath," replied Siward, "that a better man doth not exist than the Lord Chancellor; nor do I believe that the affairs of the realm were ever more wisely or more justly administered than by his Grace."

"We will hear no more!" cried Wat Tyler, in a furious tone, and starting to his feet as he spoke. "Take the false knave hence, and let him die as a traitor!"

"Traitor to whom?" demanded Siward.

"To the people!" rejoined John Ball.

The seneschal was then hurried out of the hall and taken to the court, where he was told to prepare for instant death.

Turning from the bloodthirsty throng around him, and trying to shut his ears to their furious cries, the brave old man cast a look upwards at the golden angel on the spire, which was visible from the spot, and murmured a prayer.

A large billet of wood served the purpose of an execu-

tioner's block, and Siward's head was severed from the trunk by a ferocious ruffian, provided with a sharp, two-handed sword.

This tragical incident did not interfere with the business of the insurgents, and might have been forgotten if they had not been reminded of it by the head of the ill-fated seneschal, which was fixed on the palace-gate.

Vizards sufficient to furnish forth a banquet were found in the great kitchen of the palace; and the cellars being broken open, yielded an abundant supply of wine.

Thus the rebel leaders, and a considerable number of their followers, were enabled to feast in the hall, while the rest continued the work of destruction and pillage.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HOW SAINT THOMAS'S SHRINE WAS DEFENDED BY FRIAR NOSROCK.

WHILE most of the household concealed themselves in the crypts of the cathedral, Sir John Holland and the young nobles, by the advice of the unfortunate seneschal, proceeded to Trinity Chapel, where they found Friar Nosrock, who took them to the watching-chamber.

There they remained during the rest of the day, fully expecting that the rebels would come in quest of them; but, to their surprise, they were undisturbed. As yet, they were ignorant of Siward's fate.

When night came on, they resolved to quit their asylum, though Friar Nosrock represented to them that they would run the greatest risk in venturing forth into the city.

"Should you fall into the hands of the rebels, you will certainly be put to death," he said; "and you will find it almost impossible to leave the city, since the gates are guarded, and all other outlets stopped. The Abbot of St. Vincent will give you an asylum, if he can, and so will the Prior of St. Augustine's; but should you be driven to extremity, and compelled to return hither, come back in the guise of pilgrims. I, myself, will be on the watch, and will take care you shall be admitted by the south porch."

He then let them out by a postern, and returned to Trinity Chapel, where he found the Archbishop's household assembled. As these persons had been all this time in the crypts, they had not heard what had befallen Siward; but they argued ill, since he had not appeared.

After some consultation, it was decided that half a dozen of the men should remain with Nosrock to keep watch throughout the night; the rest, including the female servants, quitted the cathedral by the postern.

We have already stated that certain of the Dartford insurgents had secured the large dormitory at the "Chequers," and had, moreover, ordered a good supper to be provided for a hundred persons.

At the appointed hour a plentiful repast was set before these unwelcome guests, and while they were discussing it, it occurred to Mark Cleaver, Liripipe, and some others, that they might contrive to possess themselves of the treasures of Becket's shrine.

Communicated in an undertone to the whole party, the plan met with general approval, and it was resolved that the attempt should be made that very night. Should it succeed they would all be enriched. But it would be necessary to enter the cathedral by stratagem, since Wat Tyler had prohibited any attempt to break into it by force, for purposes of plunder, on pain of death.

After some deliberation, they resolved to seek admittance as pilgrims, the notion being suggested to them by the fact that there were a great number of devotees staying at the "Chequers," who desired to offer prayers at the shrine at night.

Accordingly, having arrayed themselves, as they best could, in imitation of these devotees, the whole party, who had previously assembled in the courtyard of the inn, set out without noise, and on reaching the south porch of the cathedral, knocked against the great door.

Now it chanced that Friar Nosrock, who fully expected the return of Sir John Holland and the young nobles, was waiting near the door at the time, and when he heard that those who knocked were pilgrims, he imprudently opened the wicket.

Very few had entered before he discovered his mistake, but it was then too late.

Breaking from the foremost, who tried to seize him, he ran as swiftly as he could along the aisle, and through the south transept of St. Thomas's Chapel, where he suddenly disappeared from his pursuers, who were close at his heels.

In another minute, all the plunderers, with the exception of two or three, who had been left at the south porch to keep watch, arrived at the foot of the steps leading to the shrine.

A lamp burning above the altar dimly illuminated the chapel, but afforded sufficient light for their sacrilegious purpose.

Several clambered over the gilt rails surrounding the sacred spot, and proceeded to lift up the heavy wooden canopy covering the shrine.

While thus employed, they were suddenly interrupted in their task by an occurrence that seemed as if Saint Thomas himself had interfered to prevent the threatened desecration of his shrine.

A fierce growling was heard, and then came the fearful rush of a number of savage hounds towards those collected on the steps.

Terrible outcries followed, from those who imagined they were attacked by demons, in shape of dogs, and who now fled, yelling, in every direction.

These suffered severely from the sharp fangs of their pursuers, but those near the shrine fared the worst.

Caught as in a trap by their ferocious assailants, who leaped over the rails and sprang at their throats, bearing them to the ground, they had to fight for their lives, and the vaulted roof of the chapel rang with their cries.

A witness of this frightful scene, Friar Nosrock felt little compassion for the miserable wretches.

On the contrary, he called out to them, in a mocking voice:

"Soh! you would plunder the shrine of holy St. Thomas, eh? You thought it an easy task, doubtless—but you now find we can prevent your villainy!"

"Save us!" cried Mark Cleaver, who was lying prostrate on the pavement, with a huge hound standing over him. "Save us! or we shall be torn in pieces by these infernal hounds—if, indeed, they be hounds, and not fiends!"

"Have pity upon us, good brother, and call them off!" implored Liripipe, who had shrunk into a corner, and was endeavoring to keep one of his fierce assailants at bay. "Let us out of this cage, and we will depart at once!"

"You deserve the worst punishment that can befall you!" cried Nosrock.

"Holy St. Thomas, have mercy upon us!" cried Curthose, who was in as sore distress as the others. "We heartily repent what we have done! Instead of robbing the shrine, we will add to its riches."

"Have mercy upon us, holy St. Thomas!" cried all the sufferers.

"Since you call upon the good saint for aid, it will not be refused you," said the friar, somewhat relenting. And as he spoke, he opened a gate in the rails, and called off the hounds.

"Depart instantly!" he said. "If any of you be found in the cathedral five minutes hence, no further pity shall be shown you!"

Glad to escape on such terms, the villains came forth; and though they were all in a most deplorable condition, they contrived in a short time to reach the south porch.

Friar Nosrock was close at their heels with his hounds, and carefully barred the door as the last of them went out.

Shortly afterwards, the friar was joined by such of the Archbishop's household as had remained in the cathedral.

Assisted by them, and attended by his hounds, he made a strict investigation of the aisles, the nave, the transepts, and the choir.

No one was found.

Nevertheless, watch was kept by the parties throughout the night.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CONRAD BASSET AND CATHERINE DE COURCY.

THAT night, Canterbury was completely in the power of the insurgents.

The six gates were strictly guarded, so that no one could leave the city, or enter it, without permission from the rebel leaders.

Every precaution was taken to prevent the escape of Sir John Holland and the young nobles, and Wat Tyler persuaded himself he should have them in his hands on the morrow; in which case, he had fully resolved to put Sir John to death.

But he was balked in his vindictive design. After quitting the cathedral, Sir John and his companions had repaired to the Monastery of St. Augustine; where they were well received by the Abbot, and carefully concealed by him. Though strict search was made for them, their retreat was not discovered.

The three insurgent leaders fixed their quarters in the Palace, and remained there during their stay in the city. Their time was chiefly spent in the great hall, where they held a sort of Court.

Ordering the Mayor and aldermen to appear before them, they compelled them, on pain of death, to take the oath of fidelity to the league.

Since their arrival at Canterbury, the force under the command of the rebel leaders had enormously increased, and it now seemed certain that five hundred of the citizens would march with them to London.

Under these circumstances, it became necessary to appoint officers; and the appointments were made by Wat Tyler and the outlaw, who selected those whom they thought could be best depended upon.

A fierce, wild set they were, most of them belonging to the lowest grade of the people. Among the few of a higher class was Conrad Basset, the brewer's son.

This young man had recommended himself to the rebel leaders by a hatred of the nobles, almost equaling their own intensity.

This animosity, however, did not arise from sympathy with the oppressed peasantry, but from the ignominious manner in which he had been treated by Sir Lionel de Courcy, of whose beautiful daughter, Catharine, he had become passionately enamored.

Conrad Basset, who was handsomer than many of the high-born youths she had seen, had attracted the fair Catharine de Courcy's attention; and after a few words had been exchanged between them at the cathedral and elsewhere, they met one night in the garden of her father's mansion in Canterbury.

This secret interview was their first and last.

They were surprised by Sir Lionel, who came suddenly upon them with a party of servants, and having sent Catharine into the house, turned to her lover, who had been seized by a couple of servants, and after applying to him every scornful epithet that fury could suggest, he said:

"Thy father, Richard Basset, was my vassal; and when I set him free I little thought his son would have the presumption to address my daughter in language of love. But I will punish thee as I would a disobedient serf."

With this he took a staff from one of his valets, and struck the young man several hard blows with it, calling out:

"This will teach thee, thou low-born knave, to aspire to the daughter of a noble!"

Held fast by two powerful men, Conrad could offer no

resistance to this usage, and he was cast out at the gate.

From that moment he thought only of revenge. He still loved Catherine de Courcy passionately as ever, but he could not forgive her father for the degrading outrage he had inflicted upon him.

Nay, more; his vindictive feeling towards the one proud noble who had injured him extended to all his class, and when he heard of the insurrectionary league of the peasants, the object of which was to exterminate their lordly oppressors, he immediately joined it.

At length a full revenge seemed in his grasp. When the insurgents entered Canterbury Sir Lionel de Courcy—unfortunately for himself—chanced to be at home. But as he resided in a large and strongly-built mansion, and had a great number of armed retainers, he did not deem himself in danger.

But Conrad had determined to attack his house, and make him prisoner, and mentioned his design to the two rebel leaders, who approved of it.

It was fixed that the assault should take place on the morrow, and some preparations were made for it, under Conrad's personal direction.

That night two damsels, whose features were concealed by their hoods, sought a private interview with the young rebel captain.

It was granted; and when the damsels had removed their disguises, one of them proved to be Catherine de Courcy, and the other her handmaiden, Gertrude.

Catharine had never appeared so beautiful before, and Conrad's passion revived as he gazed at her.

"You must have expected me here to-night, Conrad," she said; "and you will guess that my errand is to beg my father's life. I know that if he should fall into your hands you will slay him."

"Your father can expect no mercy from me," interrupted Conrad, fiercely.

"I will not believe you can be so cruel, Conrad," she rejoined. "If you kill my father, you will kill me."

"He has dishonored me. Nothing but his blood can wash out the disgrace. Sir Lionel has made me what I am, and all the crimes I may commit will lie at his door."

"Oh, Conrad!" she exclaimed, "it is not too late to turn back. You are not meant to be the associate of rebels: your nature is loyal and true. Return to your allegiance to the king, and all will yet be well."

"I have joined this league, and am bound by oath to be faithful to it," he replied.

"You can easily be absolved from such an oath," she said. "Save my father, and I will answer for his gratitude."

"As well might you seek to wrest his prey from the tiger as ask me to part with mine!" cried Conrad.

"Then farewell forever!" she said. "You will rue your conduct when you see me stretched lifeless at your feet!"

A brief pause ensued, during which it was evident that a great struggle was going on in Conrad's breast.

In the hope of a change in his determination, Catherine stayed.

"You have conquered," he said, at length. "For your sake, Catherine, I will spare your father."

"Now I recognize you as the Conrad I loved!" she cried, springing towards him. "You will fly with us?" she added, gazing anxiously in his face; "you will abandon these dreadful rebels?"

"I cannot," he rejoined, firmly. "Not even you, Catherine, can induce me to break my plighted word."

She forbore to urge him further, and they parted.

Next morning Sir Lionel de Courcy's mansion, which was situated on the eastern side of the city, between the priories of St. John and St. Gregory, was attacked by a large body of the insurgents, and speedily taken, since no defense was made.

Sir Lionel, his daughter, and his entire household were gone.

Their flight had been secretly aided by Conrad and his followers.

The insurgents were greatly disappointed, for they meant to behead the knight; but they consoled themselves by plundering his mansion.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FRIDESWIDE.

THE insurgent's last day in Canterbury was spent in feasting and carousing, and in plundering the Abbey of St. Vincent, and two or three smaller religious houses; but no further attempt was made upon the treasures of the cathedral.

The leaders continued to occupy the Archbishop's palace, where they held their councils and issued their decrees.

By this time such numbers had flocked to their standard that the city was quite full, and the monasteries and religious houses were invaded.

Five hundred citizens of Canterbury had enrolled themselves in the revolutionary army, and signified their intention of accompanying them in their march to London.

To the command of this division, which were far better accoutred than the others, Conrad Basset was appointed.

When the grand muster of the army was made before Wat Tyler and the outlaw, a young woman, of gigantic size, and strongly proportioned, presented herself, and desired to accompany the host.

The two leaders regarded her with wonder. Though her frame was large, it was well-proportioned, and her features, though masculine, were not coarse in expression; nor could she be termed ill-looking.

She gave her name as Frideswide, and described herself as the daughter of Maurice Balsam, the miller of Fordwich.

In age, Frideswide was not more than three-and-twenty.

Though the two rebel leaders had resolved to allow no woman to accompany the host, they were so much

struck by this amazon's appearance that they felt inclined to make an exception in her favor.

While they were conferring together, Frideswide said, "I do not care to boast, but there is no man in Kent, be he whom he may, who can draw a stronger bow than I can, or lift heavier weight. Give me a quarter-staff, and you shall see what I can do!"

And, her request being complied with, she added, "Now let any man strike me, if he can!"

On this, there was a general laugh among the assemblage, but no one accepted the challenge.

However, when she told them they were afraid of her, a sturdy fellow stepped forward, brandishing a staff, and bade her look to herself.

Whether he was in jest or earnest matters not, but he quickly got a hard crack on the pate, that stretched him on the ground, amid the derisive laughter and cheers of the beholders.

"Now let another come on!" exclaimed Frideswide; "I am ready for twenty more."

But no one ventured to attack her.

After this proof of her strength and skill, the insurgent leaders decided that Frideswide should be allowed to accompany the army, and she was placed with the Canterbury men, under the command of Conrad Basset.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE DEPARTURE OF THE REBELS FROM CANTERBURY.

WHEN the host issued forth from the west gate it really presented an extraordinary spectacle, and such as had never before been witnessed in England.

Five hundred citizens of Canterbury, as we have already stated, had volunteered to accompany the march to London; but still the majority of the host was composed of peasantry supplied by the different Kentish villages.

Armed for the most part with pikes, scythes, and flails, and wearing their ordinary habiliments, they presented a singularly wild appearance.

An attempt was made to keep them together, and compel them to march in companies, but this was found impracticable.

The citizens of Canterbury were far better armed and accoutred, and carried a banner and pennons.

Trumpets were sounded, and drums beaten, as the leaders rode forth from the west gate, followed by this strange and disorderly host; and so vast were the numbers, that much delay occurred before all came forth.

The leaders, however, would not proceed on the march till the entire force was collected on the plain outside the city.

When all the stragglers had come up, John Ball took his mule to the top of the mound, and from his elevated position preached a sermon to the vast assemblage, taking for his text this couplet, of his own composition:

When Adam delyed and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?

"Who indeed?" he demanded, in a loud, mocking voice. "Not the father of the human race. I tell you, my brethren," he continued, increasing in fervor as he went on, "that by nature all men were born equal, and that there ought to be no ranks, no distinctions. By nature all men are free, and bondage and servitude, which were never designed by Heaven, but have been invented by our wicked oppressors, ought to be abolished. Heaven has, at last, given you the means of recovering your liberty, and of regaining your rightful place in the social scale, and if you neglect it, the blame will rest with yourselves. Strike the blow now, and you will all be free, all equally rich, all equally noble, and all be possessed of equal authority!"

At this juncture, the whole scene presented a very singular and striking picture.

Stationed on the top of the mound, which rose from the flat plain, was the friar, seated on his mule, with his cowl thrown back on his shoulders, and his features inflamed by excitement.

Immediately beneath him were the two insurgent leaders, with Conrad Basset, Hothbrand, and several others, all on horseback.

Not far from them stood Frideswide, accoutred in breast-plate and casque, and bearing a two-handed sword on her broad shoulders.

Near the amazon, and completely dwarfed by her, were Liripipe, Grouthead, Curthose, and the rest of the Dartford men.

Round and about stood the vast, disorderly host, with their wild, fierce visages, turned towards the friar.

Those nearest him listened to his discourse, but those at a distance shouted loudly.

The background of the picture was formed by the walls of the ancient city and the lofty spire of the majestic cathedral.

When the friar descended from the mound, Wat Tyler rode up to his place, and drawing his sword, cried out, in a voice that was heard by all, "To Rochester Castle!"

A tremendous shout answered him, and immediately afterwards the whole host set off.

During their march to Rochester, which occupied the whole of the day, they conducted themselves as if they were in an enemy's country, plundering several large mansions, and two or three convents, and slaying all who resisted them.

Nor did their leaders attempt to check ferocity and license.

Of course, the hamlets consisting only of cottages of the peasantry were respected, but all larger habitations were pillaged.

Thus, like a swarm of locusts, did the insurgents sweep on, devouring all before them, and spreading terror and confusion throughout the country.

They did not enter Faversham, but passed through Chatham and Chilham, and along the foot of the hills, and somewhat late in the evening reached Rochester, where they were warmly welcomed by the inhabitants.

Sir John de Newtoun, constable of the castle, was at once summoned to surrender, but as he hanged the messenger sent to him, preparations were made for the assault on the morrow.

[END OF BOOK FIRST.]

BOOK THE SECOND.

THE YOUNG KING.

CHAPTER I.

EDITHA IS APPOINTED ONE OF THE PRINCESS'S ATTENDANTS.

AFTER her encounter with the insurgents, outside the walls of Canterbury, the Princess of Wales continued her journey with the utmost expedition, and made no halt till she reached Dartford.

On arriving there, she alighted at St. Edmond's chantry, and, entering the little fane without any of her attendants, knelt down at the altar, and offered up heart-felt thanks for her deliverance from the rebels, concluding with an earnest prayer that their evil design might be defeated.

As she subsequently rode through the village, on her way to the priory, where she intended to pass an hour with Lady Isabel, the few inhabitants left behind treated her with the utmost respect. Her ladies only accompanied her to the nunnery; all her male attendants, including Chaucer and Messer Benedetto, were sent to the hostel.

The Prioress was greatly rejoiced to see her, and heartily congratulated her on her escape. After partaking of some refreshment, the Princess had a private interview with the Lady Isabel in the locutory. Her first inquiries were concerning Editha, and she was not surprised to hear that the young damsel had sought an asylum in the priory.

"When I offered, on a former occasion, to take her into my household," she said, "you seemed opposed to the plan. Are you still of the same opinion?"

"No," replied the Prioress. "Were your Highness to renew your gracious proposal, I would gladly accept it."

"I think you judge wisely," said the Princess. "With me, she will be out of this daring rebel's power, should he attempt to regain possession of her. Since you agree to my proposal, I will take her with me now."

"It will be hard to part with her," sighed the Prioress; "but I will not allow my feelings to influence me. She shall go with you."

So saying, she struck the bell, and the summons was instantly answered by Sister Eudoxia.

"Bid Editha come hither," she said.

When the young damsel appeared, and had made an obeisance to the Princess, who received her as graciously as before, she told her what had been arranged.

"Must I then leave you, holy mother?" cried Editha, unable to repress her tears. "Think me not ungrateful, gracious madam, if I seem loth to go," she added, to the Princess, "but I have been so happy here. I have never desired to stray beyond these walls; and now, less than ever."

"Tis best you should go, child," said the Lady Isabel, controlling her emotion. "In the troublous times that are likely to occur, you will be safer with the Princess than with me. I gladly, therefore, commit you to her care."

"But may I not return to you again?" cried Editha.

"Certainly," said the Princess. "I shall not detain you against your inclinations."

"When you are accustomed to Court life, child," said the Prioress, gravely, yet kindly, "you will not desire to return to me."

To prevent further remonstrance, she added, quickly. "But time presses. You must prepare for your journey."

"An instant!" cried Editha. Then, addressing the Princess, she said, "Perchance your Highness may not have heard what has happened since your departure?"

"Yes, I have told her all," remarked the Lady Isabel.

"Fear nothing," said the Princess. "Henceforth you will be under my protection."

Editha, however, still clung to the Prioress, and would gladly have remained with her; but finding this impossible, she bade her farewell.

"Farewell, my beloved child!" cried the Lady Isabel, embracing her affectionately. "I shall not forget you in my prayers. May all good saints watch over you!"

With a heart too full for utterance, Editha then left the room.

"Rest easy, Isabel," said the Princess, who was much touched by the scene. "I will be a mother to her."

It was an additional distress to Editha that she could not take leave of her mother, for it chanced that Dame Tyler was not at the priory on that day, and there was not time enough to send for her. However, Sister Eudoxia undertook to convey to her the daughter's tenderest adieux.

Editha did not see the Prioress again before her departure. Calm as she seemed, the Lady Isabel would not trust herself to another interview; but sent a message to the young damsel by Sister Eudoxia. It was simply this:

"Come back when you will. Your cell shall always be kept for you."

As to Sister Eudoxia, she managed to put some constraint upon herself till Editha was gone; but when she had seen the last of her, she burst into a flood of tears. All the sisters, indeed, were grieved to lose the young damsel, who was a general favorite; and many a wistful glance followed her as she rode off with the Princess's train.

Since other arrangements could not be made, she was placed on a pillion behind one of the grooms.

CHAPTER II.

ELTHAM PALACE.

So sad was the young damsel, that for more than an hour she scarcely noticed any object; but at length she became aware that they were mounting a beautifully wooded hill, and on reaching its summit, a magnificent prospect burst upon her.

From the lofty eminence gained by the cavalcade she looked down upon a dark, heathy plain, stretching far and wide, and, even then, known as Blackheath.

On the right, this plain was bounded by the royal park and domain of Greenwich. Yet her gaze rested not long on heath or park, but followed the course of the Thames, now illumined by the setting sun, to London, which she beheld for the first time.

Struck with wonder at the sight, she could scarcely believe it real. Yes; there was the great city of which she had heard so much. There was the grim old Tower, with its strong walls and battlements, and its frowning keep, with the royal standard floating above it. There was the ancient bridge, with its many narrow, pointed arches, its fortified gates at either end, and picturesque old habitations closely packed between the gates. There was old St. Paul's, with its massive roof and its lofty spire shooting to the sky. Beyond was the Savoy, the palatial residence of John of Gaunt, the proud Duke of Lancaster. Other noble mansions, monastic buildings and churches, there were on either side of the river, but nothing that charmed the young damsel so much as the distant Abbey of Westminster.

Seeing how interested she was with the view, Chaucer, who was riding a little in advance, drew in rein, and pointed out to her all the principal structures. But she needed not the poet's information, for she had recognized them at once.

While they were conversing, a large castellated mansion, hitherto screened by trees, suddenly came in sight; and as she glanced at Chaucer to inquire its designation, he told her it was the Palace of Eltham.

"The palace was built more than a hundred years ago," he said; "and ever since its completion it has been a royal residence. Henry the Third kept his Christmas here in 1269; and some fifteen years ago our late redoubted sovereign, Edward the Third, entertained here the captive, John of France. A magnificent entertainment it was, and worthy of the great monarch. We had a tournament, at which the king himself, with the Prince of Wales and all the royal dukes, jostled; and a ball, at which all the fairest dames of the Court were present. Never before, or since, have I beheld so many lovely women as on that occasion. There was one surpassingly beautiful person present, who is now buried in a convent."

Editha did not notice the latter observation, but said, "Does the Princess make Eltham Palace her chief residence?"

"Generally, she is with the Court, wherever it may be—at Windsor, Shene, Westminster, or the Tower—but she is often here. One reason why she is so much attached to the place is, that she spent many happy hours here with her valiant consort, the Black Prince."

"I do not wonder at it," said Editha. "Ah, I should have liked to see that brave prince."

"You may see one who is equally brave, though he has not earned such distinction—his brother, the Duke of Lancaster. Besides, you will see his son, the king."

"Does the king resemble his noble sire?" asked Editha.

"Not much," replied Chaucer. "He is more like the Princess, his mother."

"Then he must be very handsome."

"I doubt not you will think so, fair damsel," observed Chaucer, with a smile.

By this time they were close upon the palace, and a trumpet was blown to announce the Princess's approach.

It was a vast and stately edifice, comprehending four quadrangles, entirely surrounded by high walls, and an unusually broad and deep moat. Access was given to the palace, at the north and south, by a stone bridge with three arches, each bridge being protected by an embattled and turreted gateway.

Besides a noble banquetting-hall, the palace contained a chapel and a magnificent suite of state apartments.

A fair pleasure and a large tilt-yard were attached to the mansion, and the royal demesnes comprehended no less than three parks, each well-timbered and well-stocked with deer.

Passing through the gate, which was thrown wide open by the halberdiers stationed at it, and crossing the bridge, the Princess rode into the principal court, where a crowd of servants, in the royal liveries, with a chamberlain at their head, having a gold chain round his neck, and bearing a white wand, were waiting to receive her.

Already, tidings had been received at the palace of the rising at Dartford, and the march of the rebels to Rochester; and much anxiety being felt for the royal lady, her safe arrival was hailed with the greatest satisfaction.

These sentiments were conveyed to her by the chamberlain in a lengthened address, which, perhaps, the occasion might warrant, but which proved somewhat tedious.

Before dismounting, the Princess despatched a mounted messenger to the king, her son, who was then at the Tower, to inform him of her safe return to Eltham, and begging him to come to her early on the morrow, as she had matter of the utmost import to communicate to him.

After expressing their deep obligations to the Princess, Chaucer and Benedetto would now have taken leave of her highness; but she desired them to stay, that they might recount their adventures with the rebels to the king.

"Having been eye-witnesses of the proceedings of these lawless men, you are the fittest persons to give

his Majesty a description of them," she said. "Remain with me till to-morrow, I pray you."

These arrangements made, the Princess alighted, and entered the palace with her ladies.

The delay that had occurred afforded Editha an opportunity of looking round the quadrangle, and she was greatly struck by its magnitude and beauty; while she could easily perceive, through open arch-ways, that there were other courts beyond, proving the great extent of the palace.

That it was splendidly kept up was shown by the number of retainers. But the young damsel was positively enraptured when she beheld the grand banquetting-hall, with its richly carved screen, its gallery for minstrels, its magnificent open timber roof, and unequalled bay windows.

So overpowered was she when she followed the Princess and her ladies into this matchless hall, that she could scarcely draw breath. Some idea, of its size, though not of its beauty, may be formed, when we mention that it was upwards of a hundred feet long, proportionately wide, and nearly fifty feet in height; the enormous rafters being of chesnut.

After partaking of some refreshments, the Princess passed into the state apartments, and thence to her private rooms. She had treated Editha with marked kindness and consideration, and she now assigned her a small chamber communicating with her own rooms, and gave orders that she should be provided with suitable attire.

Fatigued by her journey, and exhausted by the anxiety she had undergone, the Princess retired early to rest, but not before she had attended complines in the chapel.

When Editha appeared next morning, arrayed in the attire provided for her, everyone was astonished by her beauty.

She no longer looked like a country maiden. Her slender figure was charmingly displayed by a tight-fitting cote hardie of green velvet; a gold girdle, from which hung a long chain of the same metal, loosely encircled her waist; and round her fair tresses was bound a snowy covrechef, that imparted additional softness to her features.

Ever accustomed to early devotional exercises at the priory, she attended matins in the chapel, and then, finding that the Princess was with her confessor in the oratory, she went forth into the pleasure.

CHAPTER III.

RICHARD OF BORDEAUX.

TEMPTED to extend her walk by the extreme beauty of the morning, she crossed the north bridge, passed the barbacan, and entered the park.

She had not proceeded far, when the splendid panorama she had previously contemplated, opened before her.

Once more the view ranged over Blackheath, traced the course of the river, and settled upon the distant city.

And again she was gazing upon the Tower, and the ancient bridge adjoining it, when her attention was suddenly called to a small party of horsemen, who had just entered the avenue, and were coming quickly along it.

At the head of the party rode a noble-looking youth, so splendidly arrayed, and mounted on a charger so richly trapped, that Editha could not doubt it was the young King.

Uncertain whether to proceed or return, she stood still; and, during that interval, the princely horseman, who was coming swiftly on, drew near.

She could now clearly discern that his blue velvet mantle, lined with ermine, was embroidered all over, and fastened at the neck with a diamond clasp; that his tunic was of cloth of silver; his girdle studded with jewels, and was the hilt of his poniard; and his velvet cap richly ornamented with precious stones.

The trappings of his charger were of blue velvet, decorated with the royal badge of the white heart, with the letter R worked in silver, proving, beyond doubt, that it was the King.

So finely cut and delicate were the youthful monarch's features, so smooth and blooming his cheeks, so long the brown locks that fell down upon his shoulders, so slight his figure, that he almost looked a damsel in male attire, especially when contrasted with the three nobles who followed him, all whom were strongly made, and had manly visages.

These knightly personages were the Baron de Vertain, Sir Simon Burley, and Sir Eustace de Valletort. The latter has already been described as the lord to whom Wat Tyler was vassal, and from whom he received his freedom.

Sir Eustace had been a great favorite with the Black Prince, and was one of those to whom the hero, when dying, committed the care of his son. Sir Eustace had discharged the trust as faithfully as he could.

Though the valiant knight had seen hard service in France, Brittany, and Castile, and had now reached the middle term of life, he was still full of vigor, and exceedingly handsome. His attire was not so extravagant as that of De Vertain, who glittered in diamonds and rich stuffs, and wore parti-colored hose and cracows, like a court popinjay as he was, but he could not compare with De Valletort.

Sir Simon Burley was somewhat older than De Valletort, but a noble-looking personage in every way.

Behind rode three esquires, and as many pages, all extremely well-mounted, and appraised in the royal livery.

The young King was not yet sixteen. Born on the feast of the Epiphany, in 1367, he was surnamed, from the place of his birth, Richard of Bordeaux. He was baptised by the Archbishop of Bordeaux, in the Church of St. Andrew, in that fair city; the Bishop of Agen and the King of Minorca being his godfathers.

Singularly beautiful as a child, and full of quickness and intelligence, Richard gave early promise of high and noble qualities, but he had the misfortune to lose his illustrious father, the Lord Edward of England, before his character was fully formed; and, indeed, the long and painful illness, sometimes attributed to poison, from which the Black Prince suffered, prevented him from bestowing sufficient care on his son. But he felt the deepest anxiety on his account, knowing the dangers he would be exposed to from the designs of his ambitious uncles, and his last thoughts were of Richard.

On the day after the death of his grandsire, Edward III, Richard, then in his eleventh year, rode, in solemn state, from the Palace of Westminster to the City of London. The superb procession was preceded by trumpeters who made the streets ring with the bruit of their clarions.

Before the youthful King rode his uncle, the Duke of Lancaster and the Duke of Northumberland. The sword of state was borne by Sir Simon Burley; and the royal charger, trapped in cloth of gold, and having a splendid plume of feathers on its head, was led by Sir Nicholas Bond. Richly arrayed pages walked on either side.

Glad in white velvet, the youthful monarch charmed all the beholders by his grace and beauty of feature. His retinue was composed of a vast number of nobles, knights and esquires, all richly appraised.

On his entrance into the city, Richard was met by the Lord Mayor, the Sheriffs and the Aldermen, in their robes, accompanied by a great body of citizens on horseback, and making a very goodly show.

After being warmly welcomed by the civic authorities, the young King rode slowly through the streets, amid the ceaseless acclamations of the assembled multitude. The conduits flowed with wine; temples and triumphal arches were everywhere reared; the houses were hung with tapestry and cloth of arras; and nothing was heard but joyous shouts, mingled with strains of music and the loud braying of trumpets.

The grandest pageant was at Cheapside, where a mimic castle of great size was erected, on the four turrets of which stood beautiful damsels, all the same age as the young King, and arrayed in vestments of white.

On the arrival of the royal procession, these lovely young damsels showered leaves of gold upon the King and those with him; and then, descending from their elevated position, served them with wine in cups of gold.

But this was not all. By means of some ingenious mechanism, which we pretend not to describe, an angel flew down from the summit of the castle, and placed a circle of gold on the young King's brow.

Everywhere received with demonstrations of loyalty and affection, Richard quitted the city, highly gratified by his visit.

As soon as the late King's obsequies were finished, Richard was crowned with extraordinary splendor at Westminster Abbey, the ceremony being performed by Simon de Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the presence of the King's three uncles, the Duke of Lancaster, the Earls of Cambridge and Buckingham, the barons, all the great officers of the crown, abbots and prelates.

No previous coronation had been so splendid, and it was hoped that it portended a prosperous and a brilliant reign.

But the King, being a minor, many years must needs elapse before he himself could assume the reins of government; and these years were fraught with peril.

A Council of Regency was appointed, of which his uncles were members, the Duke of Lancaster being the real head.

Serious events soon occurred. Hostilities were renewed with France and Spain, and the truce with Scotland was broken. The new wars occasioned enormous expenditure. Large subsidies had to be raised, and the burdens of the people were increased by the intolerable imposts. To make matters worse, the wars were not successful.

For the first two years of the young King's reign, ample grants were obtained; but the demands were so incessant, that loud complaints were made, and petitions sent to Parliament, praying for the dismissal of the ministers.

Despite all efforts to remove them, they remained in power, and continued their exactions. Fresh taxes were levied, rendered especially obnoxious by the mode of their collection, and these led to the rising we have described.

Richard's education was purposely neglected by his uncles. Sir Simon Burley, who was beloved by his father and trusted by his grandfather, had been appointed his tutor. But he had not sufficient authority to control his royal pupil. His counsels were disregarded, his reproofs derided.

However, the young King was well versed in all manly exercises—in tilting, archery, wrestling, and delighted in field sports, in which he was allowed freely to indulge. Moreover, he was a perfect horseman.

Though endowed with excellent qualities, and possessing a generous disposition, Richard was wayward and self-willed, and, even at that early age, addicted to pleasurable pursuits. Inclined to be a great coxcomb, he was extravagantly fond of dress, and loaded himself with jewelry. For one robe of cloth of gold, adorned with precious stones, he gave thirty thousand marks.

He was surrounded by flatterers somewhat older than himself, who encouraged his frivolous and extravagant tastes, and counterbalanced the wholesome advice of his mother.

Still, though grievously disappointed, the Princess did not despair, but persuaded herself that her son's nobler qualities would be developed as he grew older, and that he would eventually become worthy of the great name he bore.

Sir Simon Burley and Sir Eustace de Valletort were with the young King at the Tower when he received his

mother's message, praying him to come to her at Eltham on the morrow, and they urged him to obey the summons.

Though the thoughtless young monarch was not so much alarmed as his attendants, by the reports he had heard of the insurrection, he was curious to hear some account of it from his mother's lips.

He therefore resolved to go to her, and ordered Sir Simon and Sir Eustace to attend him. He also decided upon taking with him the Baron de Vertain, who was an especial favorite.

The royal party set out from the Tower betimes, and reached Eltham much earlier than was expected.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MEETING BETWEEN THE YOUNG KING AND EDITHA.

AFTER a momentary indecision, as we have described, Editha thought it best to turn back, but was presently overtaken by the young King, who graciously returned the obeisance she made him, and, being much struck by her appearance, drew in the rein and addressed her.

"Give you good-morrow, fair damsel," he cried, in a blithe voice. "I marvel not you have come forth early, seeing the morning is so enchanting. I have much enjoyed my ride across the heath. I had no idea it was so pleasant."

"It looks delightful, my liege," observed Editha, timidly.

"You are one of the Princess's attendants, I suppose, and have just returned with her from Canterbury?" remarked the King.

"Only from Dartford, my liege," she replied.

"From Dartford!" exclaimed Richard.

"That was where the insurrection commenced. You must have witnessed it. Were you not greatly frightened?"

"I saw very little of it, my liege. I took refuge in the priory, and the rebels quitted the village immediately, and marched on to Rochester."

"'Tis well our mother did not encounter them," cried the King.

"Indeed, my liege, her Grace did encounter them yesterday near Canterbury," replied Editha.

"Ha! Did they offer her any rudeness?" exclaimed Richard, quickly.

"No; they treated her with great respect," she replied.

"Then they are not such graceless villains as we deemed them!" cried the King, laughing. "You hear what this damsel says, my lords?" he added, turning to his attendants, who were close behind him.

"We do, my liege, and are rejoiced to learn that her Grace sustained no injury," observed the Baron de Vertain. "Had it been otherwise we would have hanged them all."

"Then you must have hanged some thousands," observed Sir Simon Burley. "'Tis most fortunate her Grace escaped so well."

"Neither she nor her ladies were in any way molested," remarked Editha.

While this colloquy took place, Sir Eustace de Valletort had been earnestly regarding Editha, and he now addressed her.

"The leader of the Dartford rebels is a smith, named Wat Tyler, is he not?" he inquired, looking at her fixedly.

"There were several leaders," she replied. "More than half the village joined the insurgents."

"I will not ask you how the insurrection originated," said Sir Simon. "We know that a tax-collector was slain."

"He deserved his fate, if all we have heard be true," interposed Sir Eustace. "The damsel has already told us that she sought refuge in the priory."

"'Twas the safest place to choose," said the King.

"Convents are not always safe from rebels," remarked De Vertain. "Nay, by St. Petronilla! they are frequently the first places attacked, since the occupants can offer little resistance."

"But the saintly Prioress of St. Mary and St. Margaret is universally beloved," cried Editha. "No one would harm her, or the holy sisterhood with her."

"You speak highly of her," observed Sir Eustace.

"I ought to do, for she has been as a mother to me," replied Editha.

By this time the King's approach had been discerned by those on the barbacan.

Trumpets were blown, and drums beaten; the portals were thrown open, and the principal officers of the household could be seen lining either side of the wide palace gate. The chamberlain, staff in hand, had even advanced as far as the bridge.

Bowing slightly and gracefully to Editha, Richard rode on, and entered the palace with his followers.

Sir Eustace de Valletort, who seemed to take a particular interest in the young damsel, cast a look back at her as he crossed the bridge.

"By St. Barbe! that damsel seems to have quite captivated you, Sir Eustace," remarked De Vertain. "And it must be owned she is singularly beautiful."

"She greatly resembles one whom I remember well, and who was accounted the loveliest woman of her day," replied Sir Eustace.

"'Tis not surprising then that this fair creature should awaken tender memories in your breast," said De Vertain.

The bustle attendant upon their entrance into the great court of the palace put an end to further discourse.

CHAPTER V.

SIR EUSTACE DE VALLETORT OBTAINS SOME INFORMATION FROM THE PRINCESS.

Not expecting the King at such an early hour, the Princess was at mass at the time of his arrival; but as

soon as her devotions were finished she repaired with her ladies to the great hall, where she found him at breakfast with his attendants.

Richard immediately arose from the table, and, flying to meet her, bent the knee and kissed her hand. This act of filial respect performed, his mother tenderly embraced him.

After she had received the congratulations of Sir Simon Burley and the others on her escape from the rebels, she was ceremoniously conducted by her son to the table, which was on a dais at the upper end of the hall.

The Princess sat on the King's right, and next to her, on the other side, was Sir Eustace de Valletort. All her ladies occupied seats at the upper table.

On the King's left were De Vertain and Sir Simon Burley. Chaucer and Benedetto were placed at the lower table. As yet, they had had no opportunity of conferring with the King. By her Grace's express orders, Editha was stationed behind the Princess's chair.

The Princess's account of her meeting with the insurgents was listened to with the greatest interest, and with evident uneasiness by Sir Simon Burley and De Valletort; but Richard, who seemed surprised and rather amused that Sir John Holland and the young nobles should return to Canterbury, did not attach much importance to the insurrection, and expressed an opinion that it would very soon be quelled.

"What can these wretched peasants do?" he cried. "Sir John and his little band ought to have scattered them like sheep!"

"Sir John thought differently," remarked the Princess, gravely. "The insurgents are stubborn and resolute, and better armed than your Majesty seems to suppose. It will be prudent and proper to make terms with them."

"Make terms with rebels! That we shall never do!" exclaimed Richard, in a scornful tone.

"I mean that the grievances of which they justly complain must be redressed," said his mother.

"I did not know that they had any grievances," cried Richard, with a careless laugh. "I fancied they were rather too well treated by their lords."

"So they are, my liege," observed De Vertain. "They are far better treated than they deserve."

"Not so, my lord," said the Princess. "They do not complain without reason. They are much oppressed, and the King will be badly advised if he does not listen to their prayers."

"They must address their prayers to the Council, not to me, madam," said Richard. "I do not tax them."

"But they say your Majesty will ruin the kingdom by your extravagance," remarked De Vertain.

"Ha! say they so? Then, by my father's head! I will grant none of their petitions! Am I to be checked in my expenditure by these sordid scoundrels?"

"Certainly not, my liege," observed De Vertain. "That were a rare jest!"

"Yet it may happen in right earnest," said Sir Simon Burley.

"It will happen, if you continue to turn a deaf ear to the complaints of your subjects," said the Princess.

"This young damsel," she added, signing to Editha to come forward, "whom I have brought with me from Dartford, will tell you how much discontent prevails among the peasantry."

"She can have had no opportunity for observation," remarked the King.

"Pardon me, my liege; I have had every opportunity," said Editha. "I have seen and heard much, and I venture to affirm, in your royal presence, that the people have just cause for complaint. This wicked and treasonable rising would never have occurred had their prayers been listened to."

"Our mother has taught you this lesson," laughed Richard, incredulously.

"No; 'tis from her I have learned it," said the Princess.

"You surprise me!" said the King. "I should not have supposed she would trouble herself with such matters. Pray, who is this fair damsel, who has contrived to obtain so much important information?"

"She is the daughter of the chief leader of the insurrection," replied the Princess.

Every one now looked astonished, and the King most of all.

"Wat Tyler's daughter!" he exclaimed. "By St. Edward, I cannot believe it!"

"It must be a jest, my liege!" muttered De Vertain.

"I am not in a mood for jesting," said the Princess, who had overheard the remark. "As I have stated, Editha is the rebel leader's daughter. But let me add, that when the outbreak occurred, she sought an asylum with the prioress of St. Mary; by whom she was yesterday committed to my care."

"I trust she does not share her father's sentiments?" observed Richard. "Nay; I am certain she is no rebel," he added, quickly, perceiving that the young damsel looked much pained by the observation.

"Your Majesty has not a more loyal subject than myself?" cried Editha, earnestly.

"Enough!" said Richard. "Had you been otherwise than loyal, I should have distrusted my own skill in physiognomy. Never, I am sure, could a treasonable thought be harbored in that gentle breast!"

"You only do her justice, my son," observed the Princess.

"May I ask your Grace a question?" said Sir Eustace de Valletort, in a low voice, to the Princess. "You say this fair damsel is Wat Tyler's daughter?"

"She passes for his daughter," replied the Princess, in an undertone, and with a certain significance. "But no one can look at her and doubt that she is of gentle birth. She has been brought up in a cottage, and as the offspring of those who have had the care of her."

"But you mentioned the Prioress of St. Mary," remarked Sir Eustace, with tremulous eagerness. "Does

she take an interest in Editha—as I think this damsel is named?"

"She has been as a mother to her!" replied the Princess.

"Sir Eustace said no more, and avoided the look fixed upon him."

Shortly afterwards, silver ewers filled with rosewater, and napkins, were brought by the attendants. On rising from the table, the Princess was conducted by her royal son to the state apartments.

CHAPTER VI.

SIR SIMON BURLEY.

PASSING through a gallery, occupying one side of the great quadrangle, and in which stood a vast number of richly-clad retainers, the Princess and her royal son, followed by all the company, entered a stately apartment, more than a hundred feet in length, and adorned with tapestry from the finest Flemish looms, representing boar hunts, wolf hunts, and scenes of hawking.

At the upper end of this magnificent apartment was an estrade, surmounted by a crimson velvet canopy, embroidered in gold with roses, and the royal cognizance of the White Hart.

On the estrade were two royal seats, designed for the King and his mother, when a council should be held, or some important personage be received by them with state ceremonial.

But the Princess did not now proceed beyond the center of the chamber, where the company assembled.

Desirous of having a private conference with her son, she took him and Sir Simon Burley into the recess of a deep bay-window; and as soon as they were out of hearing, begged the old Knight to state his opinion frankly as to the insurrection.

"Madam," replied Sir Simon, gravely, "I have already given my opinion to the King. I believe it to be the most dangerous outbreak that has ever menaced the State! Nor do I see how it can be quelled. For the present, it is confined to two counties—Kent and Essex; but I fear it will spread throughout the whole kingdom. A circumstance has just happened to me, which I will relate to you, as it shows the extreme audacity of the insurgents. A burgher of Gravesend, named Thurstan, who is a bondman of mine, solicited his freedom from me. I demanded four hundred marks; and as he refused to pay the money, I sent him a prisoner to Rochester, Castle. When taken there, he told the Constable, Sir John de Newtoun, that he would soon be set free. And it is certain he must have found some means of communicating with the rebels; for when they came to Rochester, they sent a message to the Constable, demanding Thurstan's immediate release; adding, that if he were not given up to them, they would storm the castle and take him."

"And I much fear they will try to execute the threat," remarked the Princess.

"Sir John de Newtoun will laugh at them," said the King. "I hope he will hang Thurstan from the walls of the castle, and bid the rebels take him down, if they want him."

"That would only enrage them the more, and cause them to proceed to dire extremities," said the Princess.

"You are right, madam," rejoined Sir Simon.

"Rochester is one of our strongest castles, and can hold out against a legion of badly armed peasants," cried the King.

"But it may be taken by treachery, and that is what is to be apprehended?" said Burley.

"Methinks you greatly overrate the danger, Sir Simon," said Richard. "What can the people do against the nobles and knights?"

"That question will have to be answered at the point of the sword, sire," replied Burley. "Unluckily, we have no army to oppose them."

"What!" cried Richard, in astonishment. "Is an army required to quell an outbreak of peasants?"

"Sire," replied Sir Simon, "we know not whom to trust. As yet we cannot tell who are loyal, and who are traitors. This conspiracy—for a conspiracy it is—has been so well contrived, and kept so secret, that it cannot have been the work of a common hand. Some important personage must have been concerned in it. I scarcely dare breathe my suspicions, but I think—"

And he hesitated.

"Speak out!" cried the King. "You suspect one of our uncles? It cannot be the Duke of Lancaster. He is at Roxburgh."

"I suspect the Earl of Buckingham, my liege," replied Sir Simon. "He is thought to be in Wales, but some one much resembling him has been seen in Essex since this rebellion broke out."

"You never hinted this to me before," said the King.

"I only received the information late last night, my liege, and meant not to repeat it till it should be confirmed. But I think it best not to keep it back, that your Majesty may be aware of the magnitude of the danger."

"If our uncle of Buckingham is conspiring against us, the danger is, indeed, great," said the King. "But I cannot think it."

"I have already warned you against him," said the Princess.

For a moment a shade came over Richard's countenance, but it quickly disappeared.

His mother and Sir Simon watched him anxiously.

"A council ought to be held without delay," observed the Princess. "Would it could be held here!"

"I have anticipated your wishes, madam," replied Burley. "Before quitting the Tower, this morning, I dispatched messengers to the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace, and to Sir Robert Hales, at St. John's Hospital, acquainting them both with the perilous state of things, and telling them they would find his Majesty at Eltham with your Grace."

"You did well, Sir Simon," said the Princess, approvingly. "The Chancellor of the realm and the Lord

Treasurer are best able to advise at such a critical juncture."

"I have taken another step of which I hope his Majesty will approve," pursued Burley. "Having heard that some of the citizens are disaffected, I have summoned Sir William Walworth, the Lord Mayor, and Sir John Philpot, to attend, in order that his Majesty may learn the exact truth. Both are thoroughly loyal and trustworthy, and can be relied on in this emergency."

"I know it," replied Richard; "I have perfect faith in them. But I will not distrust the good citizens of London. Whenever I have gone among them they have received me with demonstrations of loyalty and regard. You cannot fail to remember my first visit to the city, Sir Simon, and the welcome given me on that occasion?"

"I remember it well, my liege," replied Burley. "But things have changed since then. However, we shall hear what the Lord Mayor has to say."

Just then an usher, bearing a white wand, made his appearance, and, bowing profoundly, informed the King that the Lord Mayor and Sir John Philpot had just arrived at the palace.

"They are heartily welcome," cried Richard. "Bring them to our presence forthwith, and take care that their attendants are well entertained."

"They have obeyed the summons quickly," observed the Princess.

Scarcely was the usher gone, when the chamberlain appeared, and announced the arrival of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Treasurer, Sir Robert Hales.

"Our council will be complete," said the King, repeating the order he had just given to the usher. "Come, madam, let us take our seats," he added to the Princess.

"Before holding the council," she rejoined, "had you not best confer with Master Geoffrey Chaucer and Messer Benedetto? Both have been captives of the rebels, and have much to relate, which it is needful your Majesty should hear."

"Let them relate it to the council," said Richard. "Bid them follow us," he added, to Sir Simon.

Leading the Princess to the estrade, he placed her on one of the royal chairs, and seated himself beside her.

The Baron de Vertain and Sir Eustace de Valletort stationed themselves on the right of the King, while Sir Simon Burley, with Chaucer and Benedetto, stood on the left.

The general company did not move from the center of the apartment, and between them and the royal seats were grouped a number of richly clad attendants.

CHAPTER VII.

SIR WILLIAM WALWORTH AND SIR JOHN PHILOT.

PRESENTLY, a stir was heard at the lower end of the room, and two striking-looking personages, preceded by an usher, could be seen making their way through the assemblage.

The foremost was the Lord Mayor.

Above the ordinary height, strongly built, but extremely well-proportioned, Sir William Walworth had features of the true Saxon type. His locks were of light brown; his beard of the same color. His eyes were of a clear gray, quick and penetrating.

The habitual expression of his countenance was frank, good-humored, and cordial; but he could look stern enough when severity was needed. His frame showed that he possessed great personal strength, and he was a proficient in all martial exercises. Though a merchant, Sir William was half a soldier, and had a considerable body of armed men under him. Indeed, a strong escort had attended him to the palace.

The Lord Mayor wore a dark blue velvet gown, bordered with fur, and his cote-hardie was of the same stuff. Round his neck was the collar of SS, and from his girdle hung a dagger, destined to become historical.

Sir William Walworth was a wealthy London merchant, and much esteemed by his fellow-citizens for his high character. He was a member of the Fishmongers' Company, and when he was advanced to the mayoralty, a pageant of extraordinary splendor was exhibited by them in his honor. At a subsequent date his statue was placed in the great hall of the company, within a niche behind the chair of the Prime Warden.

Sir John Philpot was another renowned and wealthy London merchant. About three years prior to the date of our story, he performed a singularly daring action, to which some allusion has already been made.

When the war broke out again in Scotland, a bold pirate, named Mercer, who had several armed vessels under his command, carried off a fleet of merchantmen from Scarborough. No effort being made by the Council to capture this pirate, who continued to scour the North Sea with impunity, Sir John Philpot armed a small squadron at his own cost, and went in quest of him. Captain Mercer was easily found, and quite ready to give battle to the brave citizen, who at once attacked him, and capturing him and all his vessels, brought them into the port of London.

For this gallant and patriotic act he was reprimanded by the Council, who forbade him to wage war on his own account; but he little recked the reproof, feeling he had earned the gratitude of his fellow-citizens.

Quite as tall as Sir William Walworth, and quite as powerfully made, the brave knight, though plain of feature, had an open, manly countenance, characterized by great firmness of expression.

His locks were grizzled, and his cheeks bronzed by exposure to the weather. His costume was devoid of ornament. He wore a furled gown, beneath which could be seen a velvet tunic. From his girdle hung a purse and a badelaire, or short broadsword.

As the Lord Mayor and his companion were ushered into the royal presence, and each had made a profound

obeisance, Richard rose from his seat, and, descending a single step of the estrade, but no more, received them with great dignity of manner.

"Welcome, my good Lord Mayor," he cried. "Welcome, also, my brave and faithful Sir John Philpot! Right glad are we to see you both at a moment when our throne is threatened by rebels! You bring us, we trust, good tidings, and can give us the assurance that all your fellow-citizens continue as loyal and well affected as they have ever heretofore shown themselves towards us. Is it so?"

Having said thus much, he resumed his seat.

"Sire," replied the Lord Mayor, in a firm voice, "I cannot answer the question you have deigned to put to me as satisfactorily as I could desire; but I will not attempt to disguise the truth, however unpalatable it may be to your Majesty. The bulk of the citizens of London are as loyal and devoted as ever; but I grieve to say there are many disaffected persons among them, who seek to incite the others to rise in opposition to your authority."

Richard uttered an exclamation of anger.

"How say you, Sir John Philpot?" he cried. "Do you confirm the Lord Mayor's statement? Do you believe the citizens of London—some few of them, I mean—are factious and seditious?"

"My liege, 'tis even so," replied Philpot. "Some evil influence hath been at work among them of late, and many loyal burghers have been turned from their duty."

"By whose agency have they been thus perverted, Sir John?" demanded the King, sharply.

"'Twere dangerous to speak too plainly, my liege," he replied. "My suspicions must be for your Majesty's private ear."

"You hint not at a member of the Council, ha?"

"I hint at no one, my liege."

"Then speak plainly."

"Sir John has spoken as plainly as he can," remarked the Princess, in a low tone, to the King. "He dares not name your uncle, the Earl of Buckingham. You must question him in private."

"Thus much I will boldly declare to your Majesty," said Philpot; "and I will take the consequences on my own head. Some of those who have fomented this rebellion are not far to seek."

And as he spoke, he directed a glance at Chaucer, who was stationed near the King, as previously mentioned.

"If that false and calumnious charge is made against me, Sir John, I can easily relieve myself from it," said the poet. "Messer Benedetto and myself have both been made prisoners by the rebels, and owe our deliverance from them solely to her Highness the Princess of Wales."

"You were at Dartford at the time of the outbreak," said Sir John, still looking fixedly at him. "You were seen in converse with the rebel leader."

"Nay, good Sir John, that proves nothing," interposed Benedetto. "I also was at Dartford at the time of the outbreak, and I likewise conversed with Wat Tyler. Moreover, I was made prisoner by another rebel leader, and should be in captivity now, and in peril of my life, had not the Princess graciously undertaken that I should pay a heavy ransom, which I shall do, of course, albeit the men are rebels."

"But you are not, like Master Geoffrey Chaucer, a partisan of the Duke of Lancaster," observed Philpot.

"You have not forgiven the Duke, Sir John, because he reprimanded you for making war on your own account, in the case of the Scottish pirate, Mercer," observed Chaucer. "His grace has no more to do with this insurrection than I have."

"Then he is greatly misrepresented, and so is the Earl of Buckingham, for the citizens make free with both their names," said Philpot. "Some are for John of Gaunt, some for Buckingham."

"But none for the King?" cried the Princess.

"Yes, madam," replied Philpot; "I spoke only of the disaffected. Beyond doubt, the majority of the citizens are still loyal."

An interruption was here offered by the chamberlain, who announced the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Treasurer.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY AND THE LORD OF ST. JOHN'S.

SIMON DE SUDBURY, Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor of England, was a very stately personage, his imposing appearance being heightened by the splendor of his vestments. His cope and dalmatic were covered with the richest embroidery and white silk; all being flowered with gold. His shoes and gloves were likewise richly embroidered, the latter being adorned at the back with jewels. A silk coil covered his head.

The Archbishop's person was lofty, his expression proud, and his deportment extremely dignified.

A man of a very high order of intellect, and of admirable judgment on all matters, ecclesiastical or secular, Simon de Sudbury had exercised great influence in the state councils during the latter part of the previous reign, and was much regarded by Edward III.

Appointed Chancellor on the accession of Richard II., he had discharged the duties of his onerous office with the greatest ability and rectitude, though unfounded imputations were cast upon him by his enemies.

Since his elevation to the archiepiscopal throne, in 1374, Simon de Sudbury had conferred great benefits on Canterbury—had improved the internal condition of the cathedral, enlarged his palace, repaired the ruinous city walls, and built a new gate, which still remains to attest his worth.

Sir Robert Hales, Lord of St. John's and Lord Treasurer, who accompanied the Archbishop, had a very austere countenance. Rarely, it would seem, did a smile light up his sharp features. An aquiline nose, eyes black and piercing, complexion sallow, cheeks

scrupulously shaven, and dark locks closely shorn—such was his personal description. His figure was thin.

Round his neck he wore a broad jeweled collar.

A long robe of black velvet, with loose sleeves, and bordered with sable, formed his costume. His cap was of black velvet, without ornament.

As the Archbishop and the Lord of St. John's approached, with slow and stately step, the Lord Mayor and Sir John Philpot drew on one side, while Richard descended from the estrade.

Bending reverently, the King did not rise till the Archbishop had pronounced a benediction over him. He then thanked his Grace and the Lord Treasurer for so promptly attending to his summons.

"Never had we greater need of your wise and prudent counsel than now," he said.

"I have long dreaded this outbreak, my liege," rejoined the Archbishop, "but it has come upon us suddenly at the last. We ought to have been better prepared; we have had plenty of warnings."

"That is true, your Grace," said the King; "but the warnings have been disregarded. The question now before us is—how the rebellion can best be crushed. Come forward, I pray you, my Lord Mayor; and you, Sir John Philpot; we must have the advantage of your counsel. Sir Simon Burley, and Sir Eustace de Valletort, you must likewise lend us aid."

So saying, the King returned to his seat, and the Archbishop stationed himself on his right hand. The others gathered round the foot of the estrade.

"Your Majesty has asked how this rebellion can best be crushed," said Sir Simon Burley. "'Tis a question, I fear, that none of us can answer satisfactorily. The moment for the outbreak has been so well chosen, that it finds us wholly unprepared. Our armies are in Brittany and Spain. To remove the forces from the North would expose us to an immediate invasion from Scotland. We have scarce men-at-arms enow for the defense of London. How, then, are we to attack the rebel host?"

"Two thousand men can be raised within the city of London," said Sir John Philpot; "and if his Majesty will give me the command of them, I will march at once against the rebels. If I disperse not the knaves, I will consent to lose my head!"

"Your proposition likes us well, Sir John," observed Richard. "How say you, my Lord Mayor, can you spare two thousand men?"

"No, my liege," replied Sir William Walworth. "Not half the number—not a third. As I have already intimated to your Majesty, there are many disaffected citizens, and these ill-disposed persons would assuredly rise in revolt were an opportunity afforded them, as it would be by the removal of the soldiery, who now keep them in restraint."

"You are right," observed Sir Simon Burley.

"Would that the Duke of Lancaster were here!" exclaimed Sir Robert Hales.

"He is better at Roxburgh," cried Philpot. "Were he here, he would be more likely to lead the rebels than to aid in routing them!"

"You malign his Grace!" cried the Lord Treasurer, indignantly. "Were he present, you would not dare to make such a charge against him!"

"I will stand by my words!" said Philpot, boldly.

"The charge is false!" cried Chaucer, stepping forward; "as false as the accusation thou hast just brought against me of conspiring with the rebels at Dartford!"

"I have proof of what I have stated, that on the evening before the outbreak you had a private conference with the chief of the insurgents," rejoined Philpot. "I counsel his Majesty to keep you a close prisoner in the Tower till the rebellion be put down."

"I shall be content to remain a prisoner, if his Majesty entertains any doubt of my loyalty."

"You are a known partisan of our uncle, good Master Chaucer," observed Richard. "We shall be glad to have you with us at the Tower—not as a prisoner but as a guest. You will, therefore, return with us."

Chaucer bowed, and retired. But he cast a menacing glance at Sir John Philpot.

"I would this poll-tax had never been imposed," observed the King. "It has led to most unfortunate results."

"'Tis not the tax that has caused the outbreak, my liege, though it may seem to have done so," rejoined the Archbishop. "The peasantry have long been discontented."

"And they have real grievances to complain of," remarked the Princess. "Since, as it now appears, his Majesty cannot find soldiery to put them down, will it not be best to treat with them and grant their requests—provided they are not immoderate?"

"You say well, madam," rejoined the Archbishop. "Twill be advisable to listen to their complaints. At all events time will be gained."

"But they must not be deluded with false hopes, or they will become yet more embittered against us," said the Princess.

"Before his Majesty can make any promises the insurgents, he must know what they ask—or, rather, demand," observed the Treasurer.

"True," replied the Princess. "But I would have him meet them in a conciliatory spirit."

"In his negotiations with the rebels, his Majesty must be entirely governed by their conduct towards him," said the Archbishop. "A favorable hearing may be granted to petitions and entreaties, but he cannot yield to threats."

"Never!" cried Richard. "I would die sooner!"

"I like not the notion of treating with rebels," observed Sir Simon Burley. "But it appears to me that we have no option."

"Nay; it is certain we must either fight them or treat with them!" cried Sir Eustace de Valletort. "For my own part I would rather fight them!"

"Where are they now?" demanded the Lord Mayor.

"They were at Canterbury yesterday," replied Sir

Simon. "And, doubtless, they are there still, unless the inhabitants have expelled them."

"The inhabitants, I fear, will take part with them," said the Archbishop. "Many of them are as disaffected as the citizens of London have been described to be by the Lord Mayor."

"I am sorry to hear your Grace say so," observed the Princess. "I fancied the city was as loyal as any in England. Should it be as your Grace represents, I fear my son, Sir John Holland, and the young nobles with him, may be in some danger."

"Did you leave them there, madam?" inquired the Archbishop.

"They were compelled to take refuge in the city, in order to avoid the insurgents," she replied.

"And you have had no tidings of them since?"

"None, your Grace."

"You need have no uneasiness on their account, madam," remarked the King. "Sir John Holland has just made his appearance. You may see him, with some of his attendants, at the lower end of the room. He will bring us the last news of the rebels."

"I am right glad to see him. I own I felt much uneasiness on his account," said the Princess.

Next moment, Sir John Holland approached the royal circle.

It was evident, from the state of his attire, that he had ridden fast and far, and his appearance excited a strong feeling of anxiety among the persons around the King.

He was followed by Sir Osbert Montacute, who looked equally exhausted.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BARON DE VERTAIN AND SIR JOHN PHILPOT PROPOSE TO ATTACK THE REBELS.

RICHARD immediately arose, and, embracing his half-brother, congratulated him heartily on his getting away from the rebels.

"Our escape has been accomplished with the greatest difficulty, my liege," replied Sir John Holland. "We owe our preservation to the Abbot of St. Augustine, who got us safely out of the city, and provided us with horses. Canterbury is in the hands of the rebels, and had we been captured we should have been put to death without mercy!"

As he thus spoke, the Princess could not repress her agitation, and those near the King looked at each other in dismay.

"Hail by St. George! do the villains dare to proceed to these extremities?" exclaimed Richard.

"My liege, they are fiends let loose," said Sir John. "Already they have done incalculable mischief. Your Grace's palace has been besieged and plundered!"

"I care not for my own losses," replied the Archbishop, "provided my household and retainers are uninjured."

"The wretches have displayed a most vindictive spirit," said Sir John. "And he hesitated to proceed."

"What have they done?" cried the Archbishop.

"Fear not to tell me."

"They have put to death your seneschal, Siward, because he bravely refused to deliver up the palace to them," replied Sir John.

"Heaven's vengeance will alight upon them for the sanguinary deed!" ejaculated the Archbishop.

"Had your Grace been there, I doubt not you would have fallen a victim to their vengeful rage," continued Sir John.

"They shall be terribly requited!" cried Richard, fiercely. "We will march upon them at once, with all the force we can muster."

"The enterprise is too perilous to be attempted, my gracious liege," replied Sir John Holland, gravely. "So numerous are the rebels, that they would overpower any force you could bring against them. Canterbury, as I have just stated, is in revolt. The insurgents have compelled the Mayor and aldermen to swear fidelity to their cause; and if any of the burghers continue loyal, they dare not declare themselves. Many gentlemen have taken refuge in the monasteries and religious houses; but even there they are scarcely safe from these vile and lawless miscreants. If your Majesty seeks to punish them, you must needs besiege the city, for they will hold out against you."

"Alas! that it should be so!" exclaimed the Archbishop. "'Tis woful that those whom I have nourished as children, should act thus."

"The city will be speedily recovered," said Sir Simon Burley. "But no rash attempt must be made against it, or the result will be disastrous."

"That is certain," observed Sir John. "As yet, I have only spoken of Canterbury; but every town in Kent, every village, is in a state of revolt. Our journey hither has been attended with the greatest risk. Do I exaggerate, Sir Osbert?"

"Not in the least, my good lord!" replied the knight appealed to. "I can add my testimony to your own. We were compelled to avoid Rochester and all the large towns on our way, and even the inhabitants of the little villages tried to stop us. Had we not traveled by night, we should not have arrived here safely."

"You give a fearful picture, but I doubt not a truthful one," said the Archbishop. "This insurrection seems to have spread with the rapidity of a devouring flame."

"No wonder, since the combustibles have been everywhere prepared," observed Sir Simon. "Who are the leaders of the rebellion?" he added, to Sir John Holland.

"The ostensible leaders are Wat Tyler, the smith of Dartford; an outlaw, who calls himself Jack Straw; and a friar named John Ball, whom it would have been well if his Grace of Canterbury had hanged. 'Tis suspected there are some great persons, by whom the outbreak has been contrived, and who secretly direct the rebels."

"Have those great persons been named?" asked the King.

"My liege, it is said—falsely, no doubt—that your uncles are concerned in the plot," replied Sir John Holland.

"We have already heard as much, but are loth to believe it," replied Richard.

"I grieve to say that the rumor that the Duke of Lancaster hath had a hand in the plot is generally credited by the insurgents themselves."

"Then Sir John Philpot was right!" cried the King. "Tis clear our uncle's name supports the rebel cause."

"Believe it not, my liege," cried Chaucer.

"How! is my word doubted?" exclaimed Sir John Holland.

"No, my lord," replied Chaucer. "But you have been misinformed."

"I crave a moment's hearing, my liege," said the Baron de Vertain, who had hitherto taken no part in the discussion. "Before your Majesty comes to a decision as to the course to be pursued at this crisis, I beseech you to weigh well the consequences of allowing the rebels to march towards London unchecked. For all the excesses they may commit, your Majesty and your ministers will be held responsible—and justly so, in my opinion. At all hazards, the rebellious rout ought to be stopped, and a heavy blow inflicted upon them."

"How is it to be accomplished, and by whom?" asked Richard.

"Sir John Philpot has asked for two thousand men," replied the Baron. "Give me two hundred, and I will make the attempt. But no time must be lost."

"On my return to the Tower, I will ascertain the number of the garrison, and if I can spare two hundred men, you shall have them, my liege," observed Sir John Burley.

"I will not be outdone, Baron!" cried Sir John Philpot. "I will find two hundred hardy companions, and I will go with you."

"You will both be slain," remarked Sir Simon.

"What matter, if we check this rabble?" cried Philpot. "We shall die in a good cause, and our example will animate others."

Though some further discussion ensued, no change was made in the arrangements proposed by Sir Simon Burley, which were approved by the rest of the Council, and by the Princess.

It was therefore decided that the King should keep his Court, for the present, at the Tower. The Princess, however, determined to remain at Eltham till further tidings should be received of the rebels.

The royal party then adjourned to the banqueting-hall, where a sumptuous repast awaited them.

CHAPTER X.

THE LIEUTENANT OF THE TOWER.

AFTER taking leave of his mother, Richard set out for the Tower with a large retinue. He was accompanied by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord of St. John's, Sir Simon Burley, Baron de Vertain, the Lord Mayor, Sir John Philpot, Chaucer, and Messer Benedetto.

Sir Eustace de Valletort remained with the Princess, to act for her in case of any sudden emergency.

It has been mentioned that the Lord Mayor had brought with him a numerous escort. These men-at-arms served as a guard to the King—part of them riding in front of the royal cortege, and part in the rear.

As Richard crossed London Bridge, trumpets were blown at the gates, and many persons came forth to look at the procession; but no shouts were uttered, and the people generally appeared sullen and discontented.

Nor did his Majesty meet with a better reception as he rode along Thames Street, though he proceeded at a slow pace, and bowed graciously to the concourse.

Much mortified, Richard made some observations on the moody looks of the people to the Archbishop, who replied:

"Their demeanor proves they are as disaffected as we have been told, my liege. The affections of your people have been alienated from you by those who have designs upon your throne. The spirit of rebellion is abroad, and must be extinguished."

Highly indignant at the insolent and unbecoming deportment of the populace, the Lord Mayor escorted the King to the Bulwark Gate of the Tower, and there quitted him with the strongest expressions of loyalty and devotion.

"I shall always be close at hand," he said, "always ready to fly to your Majesty, in case of need."

"Enough!" cried Richard. "I never doubted Sir William Walworth's loyalty. If all others fail me, he will not."

Messer Benedetto departed at the same time, and, in taking leave of the King, said that if his Majesty should require money, all his own funds and those of his partners should be at his disposal.

Richard thanked him heartily, but trusted he should not need a loan.

"Nay, my liege," replied the Lombard merchant; "'tis not as a loan that I offer the money, but as a subsidy."

"By our Lady! you are a true man, Messer Benedetto!" exclaimed the King, well pleased. "We trust we shall not have to apply to you but be sure we shall not forget your noble offer."

Sir John Philpot entered the Tower with the King, to await his Majesty's decision as to the proposed attack on the rebels.

A feeling of dejection, caused by the cold reception he had met with, had taken possession of the young monarch; but this was quickly dispelled as he crossed the moat and rode through the wide arch of the By-ward Tower, amid the bruit of clarions and the beating of drums.

The outer ward was lined with archers, arbalestriers and piquiers, in their full accoutrements, and making a goodly show.

The sight of these hardy men, who regarded him with loyal looks, raised Richard's confidence, and he felt assured that while they and their comrades continued faithful, his crown could not be wrested from him.

At that time, the Tower contained within its limits a royal palace of considerable size, situated at the south of the White Tower, and occupying the whole of the space between that majestic structure and the inner walls.

The palace was approached by a gateway flanked by towers, leading to a small court, and here Richard and his attendants alighted.

His Majesty was received by Sir Nicholas Bonde, the Lieutenant of the Tower, Sir Robert de Namur, the Baron de Gommegines, Sir Henry de Sauselles, and some others.

While the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord of St. John's, and Chaucer entered the palace, the King addressed himself at once to the Lieutenant, and said:—

"Sir Nicholas, we desire to send a small party of men against the rebels."

"Under whose command, my liege?" inquired the Lieutenant, bowing.

"Under the joint command of the Baron de Vertain and Sir John Philpot," replied Richard. "Can they have two hundred archers?"

"No, my liege; but if they could, what would such a trifling force as that avail against the rebel host?"

"Leave that to us, Sir Nicholas," interposed Philpot. "Give us a hundred archers, and we will bring back Wat Tyler's head."

"If you will engage to do that, you shall have them and welcome, Sir John," rejoined the Lieutenant, with a grim smile.

"If I do not, you shall have my own, Sir Nicholas," cried Philpot.

"Nay, by my troth! I want it not," said the Lieutenant. "But I suppose your request must be granted, though the fortress will be denuded of a third of the garrison."

"Heed not that, Sir Nicholas," observed the King. "Let the men be got ready forthwith."

"A hundred, sire—not one more," said the Lieutenant.

"But you have promised to bring another hundred, Sir John?" observed De Vertain.

"And I will keep my word," rejoined Philpot. "Two hours hence, five score hardy companions, completely armed and well mounted, shall be on Tower Hill."

"And I will answer that the Baron de Vertain shall not keep you waiting," said Richard, glancing at the Lieutenant, who bowed in assent.

"When next I appear before your Majesty, I trust to bring you good news," said Philpot.

"Would I could go with you!" cried the King. "But it seems that must not be."

"Nay, my gracious liege; you are best here," said Sir John Philpot.

And, with a profound obeisance, he departed.

At the appointed hour, ten score armed horsemen appeared on Tower Hill.

Their leader, mounted on a powerful war-horse, protected by a chanfron and flanchieres, wore a suit of ringed mail, closely fitting his limbs, and a hood of chain mail, that only left his face visible.

Over his armor he had a white surcoat, worked with his crest. The troop had a banner and pennons.

Almost at the same moment a company of well-mounted archers, numbering likewise two hundred, and commanded by a noble knight, sheathed in complete mail, and riding a richly caparisoned charger, crossed the moat, with a broad banner borne before them and pennons flying.

A loud shout was raised by the party on the hill, which was responded to by the archers.

The two companies then formed a junction, and rode off at a quick pace towards London Bridge, causing much wonderment and speculation among the citizens as they proceeded.

From the eastern battlements of the Tower, Richard witnessed their departure.

As they disappeared, he heaved a sigh.

His Majesty was attended by the Lieutenant, Sir Simon Burley, and the Baron de Gommegines, none of whom seemed hopeful.

"'Tis the maddest expedition ever planned," observed Sir Simon. "We shall see none of them again. Worst of all, your Majesty will lose two hundred archers and ten score stout men-of-arms, of whom you are sorely in need."

CHAPTER XI.

SIR EUSTACE DE VALLETORT MAKES A DISCLOSURE TO EDITHA.

THOUGH not free from alarm, the Princess of Wales deemed herself safe at Eltham under the care of a commander so vigilant and experienced as Sir Eustace de Valletort, and if an attack upon the palace should be threatened, she knew she could easily retreat to the Tower.

Delighted with her new position, Editha had felt quite happy until the arrival of Sir John Holland at the palace; but his presence, though disagreeable, gave her little uneasiness, because she could rely upon the Princess's protection.

Sir John was greatly surprised to find the young damsel among his mother's attendants, but he asked no questions, and gave no sign that he even recognized her. That he had abandoned his designs cannot be asserted, but he masked them under an air of haughtiness and indifference.

But there was a person at the palace who excited a

different feeling in Editha's bosom from that she experienced towards the young noble.

From the first moment she beheld Sir Eustace de Valletort, she had felt an interest in him for which she could in nowise account. She was attracted towards him as if by a spell.

A similar sympathetic feeling—though perhaps even stronger—had been experienced by Sir Eustace. Mingled emotions agitated his breast when he gazed upon her, and carefully perused her features. He had arrived at a certain conclusion respecting her, even before his surmises were confirmed by his discourse with the Princess.

No opportunity of addressing her in private occurred until after the departure of the young King and his retinue for the Tower. The facility for the interview he so ardently desired was afforded by the Princess, who sent Editha with a message to him.

He was in the garden at the time, alone, pacing to and fro on the terrace, musing sadly on the past.

When the young damsel came forth, he advanced to meet her, showing by his manner how pleased he was to see her.

After she had delivered her message, which was of little import, and did not require an answer, she was about to retire, but Sir Eustace detained her.

"Stay, fair damsel," he said; "I would fain have a word with you."

Predisposed towards him, as we have described her, Editha very willingly complied.

"You will not wonder at the interest I take in you when I tell you that you resemble one who was very dear to me, and is now lost to me forever."

Having said thus much in accents that betrayed deep emotion, he paused.

Editha did not venture to make an observation. Presently he continued:

"Yes, you are very like her—so much so, that I could almost have declared you are her daughter."

"But the Princess has acquainted you with my story, noble sir," cried Editha, trembling. "You know that I am—"

"I know you are not the daughter of those who have brought you up," said Sir Eustace.

Editha gazed at him in astonishment, scarcely able to believe she had heard aright.

"You look too good—to kind too trifle with me, noble sir," she cried. "Is this true? Speak—in pity, speak!"

And she clasped his hands in her agitation.

"It is true! I swear it before heaven!" he rejoined, solemnly.

Editha had become pale as death, but she maintained her self-possession by a powerful effort.

"I will open my heart to you, noble sir," she said, in low, tremulous tones, "as I would to my confessor. At times, this conviction has forced itself upon me, but I have always dismissed it, and blamed myself for indulging it."

After a momentary pause, she added, earnestly, "'Tis an inexpressible relief to find I am not Wat Tyler's daughter. Though I am beholding to him for much kindness, and he has ever treated me as a father, I cannot love him as I once did."

"I do not wonder at it," said Sir Eustace. "'Tis proper, therefore, this disclosure should be made to you. Think of him no more."

"Nay; I must needs think of him," she said, "unless the past can be obliterated. But you have more to tell me."

"Be content with what you have already learnt," replied Sir Eustace, gravely. "I have no authority to make any further disclosure."

"Do you lack authority?" she cried.

"Yes," he rejoined. "There are secrets that cannot be revealed save by dying lips—perchance not even then. Question me no more. You cannot doubt that I am deeply interested in you?"

"No, no! Your looks proclaim your sincerity!" she cried.

"I will prove it to you," he said, in accents that vibrated to her heart. "Since I cannot name your father—since you may never behold him—I will take his place. I will be a father to you!"

With a look of indelible gratitude she seized his hand, and pressed it to her lips.

At the same time she made an effort to kneel, but he prevented her.

"Control yourself, my child," he said, with a look of the tenderest affection; "we may be observed."

The apprehension was justified. The terrace on which they stood faced the state apartments; and from an open window in the great gallery Sir John Holland and Sir Osbert Montacute witnessed the interview just described.

Entirely misconstruing the nature of the meeting, and influenced by jealousy, the young noble vowed revenge.

"This coy damsel is a good specimen of her fickle sex!" observed Sir John. "She regards me with aversion, and flies from me, yet she rushes into the arms of a man old enough to be her father! 'Tis intolerable! Sir Eustace may plume himself on his conquest; but he shall not boast long, for, by St. Paul! I will rob him of his prize. But see, they separate, though she seems as if she could scarcely tear herself away, and casts a tender look back at him! Let us intercept her!"

With this, he hastily quitted the window, and, followed by Sir Osbert, hurried to the entrance-hall, through which he thought it likely Editha would pass.

And so it turned out, for, just as they reached it, the young damsel came in.

On seeing Sir John, she tried to avoid him, but he stopped her.

"Why so cold and distant to me, fair damsel?" he said. "You can bestow sweet smiles and soft words on others."

"Let me pass, I pray you, my lord," she said. "I am going to attend on the Princess."

But he detained her while he said, in a low voice:

"Assume this manner, if you choose, to others, but it will not impose on me. I saw what took place on the terrace not many minutes ago. You were not reserved with Sir Eustace de Valletort. Ah! I have called a blush to your cheeks."

"Sir Eustace will know how to answer you, my lord!" she rejoined, proudly.

"I shall not trouble myself with him," he returned. "Had you not better purchase my silence with the Princess?"

"How, my lord? Do you dare to insinuate?"

"Nay; I shall insinuate nothing. I shall merely mention to her Grace, what Sir Osbert and myself beheld from the gallery-window. Ha! fair damsel, you tremble now, and turn pale!"

"This conduct is unworthy of you, my lord," she cried; "but I am well assured Sir Eustace will resent the imputation you have cast upon him! Let me go!"

Sir John, however, might have persisted in the annoyance, had not an interruption occurred that compelled him to release her.

From the door communicating with the court, two knights entered the hall.

They were the Baron de Vertain and Sir John Philpot, who had called at the palace in the hope of inducing Sir John Holland and some of his attendants to accompany them on their expedition.

On beholding them, the young noble quickly released Editha; and hurrying away, she ascended the great staircase, and proceeded to the Princess's private apartments.

"I did not expect to see you back so soon," cried Sir John, addressing the new comers.

De Vertain then explained their errand; and, after a brief consultation with Sir Osbert, the young noble agreed to go with them.

"If we can slay their leaders, we shall strike terror into the host," he said. "We must dash upon them like falcons on their prey, and, having struck down those whom we aim at, beat a hasty retreat. Where are your men?"

"In the park," replied De Vertain. "Will you return with us?"

"In half an hour I shall be ready with my followers," replied Sir John. "Will you wait as long?"

"Gladly," replied the two knights.

How they passed the interval it boots not to relate. They did not see the Princess, but had some converse with Sir Eustace de Valletort, who came into the hall.

In less time than he had mentioned, Sir John Holland had donned his armor and mounted his charger. A dozen young nobles, as many knights and esquires, and a score of armed men, were likewise ready to attend him.

He then rode from the palace, with De Vertain and Sir John Philpot, who complimented him upon his extraordinary promptitude.

They found the two companies waiting for them in the avenue, and the whole party set off in good spirits for Rochester, where they expected to encounter the insurgents.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW SIR JOHN HOLLAND RETURNED FROM THE EXPEDITION.

For two days no tidings were heard of the expedition, either at the Tower or at Eltham. Nor was any reliable intelligence received of the proceedings of the rebels. It was rumored that the latter had quitted Canterbury, that their numbers had numerously increased, and that they were marching on Rochester, committing terrible excesses on the way; but nothing certain was known.

Great anxiety was felt by the Princess for her son, Sir John Holland. He did not take leave of her before setting out, well knowing she would oppose his departure; but he left a message for her, saying he should soon be back.

But he came not, and she had little expectation of seeing him again.

That his absence was not regretted by Editha need scarcely be said; and her chief fear was that he would speedily return.

Apprehensions of a very different kind were felt by Sir Eustace de Valletort. He did not anticipate that the expedition would be successful, and had not encouraged it. Well knowing Sir John Holland's obstinacy of character, he did not remonstrate with him on taking away so many armed men, but he was much vexed to lose them.

Though the force now at Sir Eustace's command was insufficient for the defense of the palace, he made every possible preparation for the attack he had reason to apprehend, and neglected no precaution against a sudden surprise. Both drawbridges were kept strongly guarded, and sentinels stationed in the turrets of the battlemented walls.

But for two days, as we have said, all remained tranquil, and no tidings were received either of friends or enemies.

During this interval, no word in private had been exchanged between Sir Eustace and Editha, and they had only met when she was in attendance in the banquetting-hall or elsewhere.

Evidently, the knight put great constraint upon himself; but he could not hide—at least, not from the quick gaze of the Princess—the deep interest he felt in the young damsel.

As to Editha, ever since the interview on the terrace an extraordinary change had taken place in her breast. With the intuitive perception of her sex, and by putting many circumstances together, she had been able to penetrate the mystery that surrounded her.

Nothing doubting that Sir Eustace was her father, she had already begun to feel for him the affection of a daughter. Happily she could indulge those feelings without being distracted by the presence of Sir John Holland.

The Princess sought for no explanation. She divined the truth. But, despite her anxieties for the King, for Sir John Holland, and even for herself, her thoughts were much occupied about the young damsel.

It was, indeed, a most anxious period, for no one could tell what the next few days might bring forth.

Gloom settled upon the palace. All its inmates, even the youngest and most light-hearted, seemed oppressed by forebodings of ill. Mirth and festivity were completely vanished—even from the great kitchen, where the household were wont to assemble, and where laughter had always heretofore resounded over the cups of strong ale and mead at supper.

Extremely devout, as we have shown, the Princess passed much of her time in prayer, and was much more frequently in the chapel attending the performance of religious rites than in the hall.

On these occasions Editha was always with her, and, indeed, so were her ladies.

Thus the time passed at the palace.

Late in the afternoon of the third day the guard on the summit of the northern gateway descried a small party of horsemen coming along the avenue.

Steeds and riders looked wearied and distressed, and the former seemed ready to drop with fatigue. To reach the palace was as much as they could achieve. No doubt this little troop was the remnant of the companies that had set forth so valiantly to check the rebels.

Word being sent to Sir Eustace of the appearance of the party, he ordered the drawbridge to be instantly lowered, and went forth to meet them.

Sir John Holland could now be plainly distinguished, with his armor battered and blood-stained; but neither Sir John Philpot nor the Baron de Vertain were to be seen.

When the young noble dismounted, his steed shook as if it would have fallen, and he himself could scarcely stand.

"I am sorry to see you thus, my lord," said Sir Eustace, supporting him. "I trust you are not badly hurt?"

"No," replied Sir John, with a ghastly smile, and in a hoarse voice. "I got a few scratches in the encounter with the rebels, but nothing to signify."

"That is well," rejoined Sir Eustace. "But I do not see De Vertain and Philpot. What of them?" he added, in an anxious tone.

"If they have escaped with life, as I have done, 'tis the best that has befallen them!" replied Sir John. "But I have seen nothing of them since the fight. We were worsted by the rabble. But we have done some execution upon them," he added, with a grim smile.

He then became exceedingly faint, and Sir Eustace besought him to enter the palace, and fortify himself with a cordial.

"While I am able to speak," said the young noble, faintly, "let me state that I am pursued by a large party of rebels. We owe our escape from them entirely to the swiftness of our horses."

"Are they far off?" demanded Sir Eustace, anxiously. "Some five or six miles, it may be," replied Sir John Holland. "The troop, which numbers several hundred men, is led by the outlaw styling himself Jack Straw—a desperate and daring villain, who has conceived a deadly animosity against me. With him is a certain Conrad Basset—a young man of courage and enterprise, with whom I have had a personal conflict, and I should have slain him, if it had not been for the outlaw."

"Then you believe this rebel leader is in pursuit of you, my lord?" observed Sir Eustace.

"I am sure of it," replied Sir John. "And I am, also, sure he will attack the palace when he finds I am here. He has vowed to capture me, or slay me, and he will try to keep his word."

"Then tarry here no longer, but come within," cried Sir Eustace.

As they moved slowly towards the palace, they were followed by the men-at-arms, who looked quite as much exhausted as their leader.

When all had crossed the drawbridge, Sir Eustace gave orders that it should be raised, the gates shut, and a sharp look-out kept by the sentinels.

CHAPTER XIII.

SIR JOHN HOLLAND'S NARRATIVE.

Nor without difficulty did Sir John Holland reach the banquetting-hall; but, after emptying a goblet of wine, he felt much revived, and was able to converse with the Princess, who, on hearing of his return, had flown to meet him, full of maternal solicitude.

In reply to her inquiries, Sir John said that the expedition he had joined proceeded to the hills above Rochester, which they found occupied by the rebels.

"They are in great force," he continued, "and we ascertained that they now number sixty thousand men—perhaps more. They are besieging Rochester Castle, and I much fear will take it. Since nothing could be done against such a numerous host, we waited on the hills till this morning, when we perceived a large troop of horse come forth from the city. They were in marching order, and must have numbered six hundred, at the least. Their leaders were the outlaw and Conrad Basset. Though our force was so disproportionate, we did not hesitate to attack them. Dashing upon them suddenly, we caused great slaughter, killing them in heaps. We had hoped to rout them, but they held their ground, and, in the conflict that ensued, being overpowered by numbers, nearly all our men were slain. My aim was to kill the two leaders; but while I was engaged with Conrad Basset, the outlaw joined him, and I was forced to fly, bringing with me only a dozen men. As you may well believe, we had to ride hard, or we should have been captured. For some miles the outlaw was close behind us, but though he was well mounted, his men were not, and he could not come on alone. So we soon left them at a distance.

But they have not abandoned the pursuit. We shall have them here anon."

Just as Sir John had brought his narrative to an end, and his mother, who had listened to it with breathless interest, was beginning to question him as to his companions-at-arms, a great noise was heard without, followed by joyful shouts, with which the names of De Vertain, Philpot, and Sir Osbert Montacute were mingled.

"Ha! by St. Paul! they are safe—they are here!" cried the young noble, starting to his feet.

Next moment Sir Eustace de Valletort entered the hall, bringing with him the three valiant personages in question.

They looked greatly fatigued, and had all suffered more or less in the encounter with the rebels.

Such greetings passed between them and Sir John Holland as can only be exchanged under similar circumstances.

Very few words sufficed to explain the manner of their escape.

All three had been unhorsed—or, rather, their horses had been killed by the rebels; but each had caught a fresh steed, and had managed to extricate himself from the hostile throng by hewing down, or trampling upon, all who sought to stay him.

Once free, they had joined together; when, learning from the shouts that Sir John Holland had escaped, they had followed him as fast as they could, but must have taken a different route to Eltham.

"Heaven be thanked, you are safe!" exclaimed the Princess.

"We have accomplished nothing," said Sir John Philpot; "for though we have slain many rebels, we have lost nearly all our men, and have failed in our chief design. But your Grace must not remain here. The rebels are at our heels, and most assuredly will attack the palace."

"The Princess need be under no apprehension," said Sir Eustace de Valletort. "An underground passage leads from the palace to the hunting-tower above Greenwich, by which she can safely depart at any time with her ladies and an escort. As you know, there is always a royal barge at Greenwich."

"I have heard of such a subterranean passage as you describe, but have never seen it," said the Princess.

"The entrance to the passage is secret, madam, but I am acquainted with it," replied Sir Eustace; "and will conduct you to it whenever you desire."

"I will wait to see what happens," said the Princess.

"You had best not wait too long, madam," observed Sir John Holland.

At this juncture an esquire entered the hall. "Methinks we shall learn something now that may influence your Grace's decision," said Sir Eustace. "Hast thou aught to say to me?" he added, to the esquire.

"A large body of horsemen have just appeared," was the reply. "As far as I can guess, they are about six hundred strong—half being archers, and half cross-bowmen. They have halted at the further end of the avenue. I must not omit to mention that they have a banner of St. George with them, and half a dozen pennons."

"Ha! the insolent villains!" exclaimed Sir Eustace.

Just then, a second esquire entered the hall, and stated that a herald, attended by a trumpeter, was riding slowly towards the palace gate.

"A herald! Ha!" ejaculated Sir Eustace. "I will hear what he has to say."

"I will go with you, Sir Eustace," said the Princess. "I shall be guided as to my departure by what takes place."

"We will all go!" cried Sir John Holland. "Lead me your arm, Baron," he added, to De Vertain.

The Princess was then conducted by Sir Eustace to the battlemented walls adjoining the gate.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONRAD BASSET DEMANDS THAT SIR JOHN HOLLAND SHALL BE DELIVERED UP.

On gaining this position, they saw the herald, preceded by a trumpeter, arrayed in a tabard, riding slowly along the avenue.

He was well mounted, and well armed; and, as he drew nearer, the Princess was struck by his proud looks and deportment.

"That man cannot be a peasant," she remarked.

"'Tis Conrad Basset," replied Sir John Holland.

When he got within fifty yards of the gateway, the herald halted, and the trumpeter, who was a little in advance, sounded his horn thrice.

As the ringing notes died away, an officer, stationed, with a guard of archers, on the barbican, called out, in a loud voice:

"What would'st thou?"

Without betraying the slightest fear, or abating the haughtiness of his deportment, the herald rode towards the barbican and spoke thus, in a clear voice, and with great deliberation:

"Say to the noble or knight who may be in command of the palace, that we, the commons of Kent, having been outrageously treated by Sir John Holland, half-brother to the king, who hath endeavored to carry off a damsel by force from her father, and well knowing that we shall not obtain justice in any other manner, demand the delivery up to us of the said knight, in order that he may be punished summarily for his offense."

Astounded by the demand, Sir John Holland's pallid cheek flushed darkly, and he would have instantly and furiously responded if the Princess had not checked him.

The rejoinder, however, was given in a stern, determined tone by Sir Eustace.

"Tell those who have sent thee," said the commander, "that I, Sir Eustace de Valletort, now in charge of this palace, and representing her Highness the Princess of

Wales, treat their insolent demand with scorn. Nor, were it even couched in befitting language, would I vouchsafe to listen to it. I will not treat with rebels, nor have I any authority for what I am about to say; yet, having some pity for thy misguided companions, I would have thee repeat my words to them. If they desire to obtain certain liberties and privileges, they must at once lay down their arms, and return to their allegiance to their sovereign lord, the King."

To this address the herald returned a contemptuous laugh.

"Since you refuse to deliver up Sir John Holland," he said, in the same haughty and defiant tone as before, "we will take him and behead him!"

So wroth was the young noble at this audacious announcement, that he would have ordered the archers to bend their bows upon the speaker, if Sir Eustace had not interposed.

"Hold!" he exclaimed, authoritatively. "No harm must be done him."

The herald seemed to feel secure, for after calmly surveying the battlements, he turned his horse's head, and rode slowly back.

Ere long he was joined by a horseman, who galloped from the rebel host to meet him, and was recognized by several of the lookers-on as the outlaw chief.

After a few words had passed between the pair, the outlaw turned partly round, and shook his hand menacingly at the barbican.

Having witnessed this ominous meeting, the Princess quitted the battlements and returned to the banqueting-hall, where a conference took place, at which Sir Eustace and the rest of the knights assisted.

All were of opinion that she should set forth for the Tower without delay.

"A few hours hence," urged Sir Eustace, "flight may be impossible. Now it can be safely accomplished."

"Say no more, Sir Eustace," she rejoined. "I will prepare for my departure at once. You must escort me, my lord," she added, to Sir John Holland.

"Were I to quit the palace at this juncture, madam," he replied, "the rebels would say I feared them. They shall both see me and feel the weight of my arm."

"Beware how you fall into their hands, my son," she remarked, anxiously. "They will not spare you. You had better come with me."

"Sir Osbert Montacute will escort you, madam—I cannot," said Sir John.

On this intimation, Sir Osbert instantly proffered his services, which were graciously accepted by the Princess, though she cast a reproachful look at her son.

"By the time your preparations are made, madam, all shall be ready for you," said Sir Eustace. "I counsel you to take your jewels and valuables with you."

The Princess then withdrew to her own apartment, from which, in less than half an hour, she re-appeared with her ladies each of whom had a casket in her hand. Amongst them was Editha.

Meanwhile, by Sir Eustace's orders, all the Princess's personal attendants, pages and others, had assembled in the hall. With them were her confessor, her almoner, and her physician. Besides these, there were half a dozen armed attendants.

Sir Eustace and Sir Osbert were waiting for her, but she did not see her son or Sir John Philpot.

"Sir John Holland is on the ramparts, madam," observed De Vertain. "He charged me to say that he hoped soon to join you at the Tower."

"Has the assault commenced?" inquired the Princess, alarmed by the sounds that reached her ear.

"It has, madam," replied Sir Eustace. "Will it please you to come with me? The entrance to the subterranean passage is on the other side of the court. All is ready for your departure."

CHAPTER XV.

THE SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGE.

As the party traversed the court, shouts and other noises could be distinctly heard; and as Sir Eustace's looks plainly showed that he longed to be at his post, the Princess quickened her pace.

In another moment they reached a tower at the lower end of the quadrangle, and, passing through an arched doorway, guarded by a couple of halberdiers, entered a circular chamber on the ground floor.

In the center of this chamber, which had an arched and groined roof, and was lighted by narrow, loop-holed windows, was a trap-door, now lying open.

The trap-door was of unusual size, and communicated with an underground chamber, from which ran the subterranean passage about to be tracked by the fugitives.

The vault was illumined by torches borne by men-at-arms.

"Having brought your Grace thus far," said Sir Eustace, "I will now commit you to the care of Sir Osbert Montacute, who has full instructions. I trust your Grace will arrive safely at the Tower."

With a valedictory look, full of tenderness, at Editha, he then hurried on to the ramparts.

The underground chamber to which the fugitives descended was of considerable size, and solidly constructed of stone.

In a few minutes all had come down, and the trap-door was closed and fastened.

Before proceeding, the Princess called Editha to her, and bade her keep by her side.

The word being given by Sir Osbert Montacute, who marched a little in advance of the Princess, the whole party entered the subterranean passage, which was sufficiently wide and lofty, well built with brick, and arched throughout.

At first, it was perfectly dry, though further on, as they passed under the moat, the atmosphere became humid.

The torch-bearers moved on in front, and, seen by

this light, the procession formed a very striking picture.

Some of the Court damsels manifested alarm, but the greater part of them talked and laughed lightly, as did the pages. The confessor, who was close behind the Princess, said never a word, and Editha remained silent.

By-and-by they came to a strong iron gate, which had to be unlocked, and some forty yards further on there was another gate.

The party were now under the moat, and the great chillness caused a general shivering among the damsels; but after they had passed through the second gate the dampness ceased.

Infinite care had been bestowed upon the construction of this remarkable subterranean passage, some portion of which still exists. Not only were the walls strongly built, as described, but air was admitted by singularly contrived shafts. There were also branch passages, stairs, and decoys, intended to lure a hostile party to pitfalls.

These avenues to destruction were pointed out to the Princess, and their purposes explained to her by Sir Osbert Montacute; and she shuddered as she gazed into the dark passages.

"We cannot miss our way in this mysterious labyrinth?" she inquired, in an anxious whisper, of Sir Osbert.

"Impossible!" he rejoined. "Our guide, Baldwin, is familiar with the place."

Other passages were next pointed out connected with sally-ports, and Sir Osbert thought these might possibly now be used in an attack upon the besiegers.

That Editha was without alarm we will not venture to assert; but she exhibited no sign of trepidation, and surprised the Princess by her firmness. However, her courage was put to a much more severe test anon.

The party had proceeded without hindrance of any kind, and with tolerable expedition, for about a quarter of a mile, when Baldwin, the torch-bearer, who acted as guide, and was a little in advance of the others, suddenly stopped, and held up his hand in a warning manner.

At this signal, those who followed stopped likewise.

"In heaven's name! what is the matter?" cried the Princess, in great alarm, which was shared by all those near her.

"The enemy is in the passage, madam," rejoined Sir Osbert, with forced calmness. "Hear you not those sounds?"

And as he spoke, sounds of an approaching party were heard in the distance.

"They appear to be numerous," he continued. "'Tis well for us they have betrayed themselves. Had they come on cautiously, we must have fallen into their hands. 'Extinguish the torches,' he added to the men in advance.

The order was instantly obeyed, and the passage plunged in profound darkness.

Half-stifed cries arose from the terrified damsels; but they quickly became quiet, conscious that their safety depended on silence.

By this time Sir Osbert had been joined by Baldwin.

"We must instantly turn back, my lord," said the man. "We shall not be able to reach the gates; but I will take you to a retreat where her Grace and her ladies may be concealed."

"You hear what he says, madam," remarked Sir Osbert. "Will you trust him?"

"I will," she replied; "I do not doubt his fidelity."

"Come with me, then, madam," cried Baldwin, making his way through the throng, while the Princess followed, grasping Editha's hand.

Close behind them came the rest of the party, whose movements were quickened by sounds proclaiming that the enemy was drawing nearer.

A side passage, however, was soon reached, and the whole party being safely bestowed within it, Sir Osbert, with Baldwin and the armed men, stationed themselves near the entrance.

They were less apprehensive of discovery, since it was certain that the rebels, who were now close at hand, had not got torches.

Nor did the villainous intruders appear to be aware that they had accidentally interfered with the Princess's flight. Their object seemed to be to obtain access to the palace by means of the subterranean passage, the existence of which had doubtless been revealed to them by some traitor.

As they were passing along in the darkness, one of them chanced to put out his hand, and detected the side passage wherein the fugitives had taken refuge, and immediately called out to his comrades:

"Hold! you are going wrong."

"How know'st thou that, Elias Liripepe?—for I guess 'tis thou by thy voice, though I cannot see thee," rejoined the leader.

"Yes, 'tis I, Captain Hothbrand," replied Liripepe.

"This is the right way."

"Methinks thou art mistaken," said Hothbrand.

"But, prithee, examine the passage as well as thou canst."

"I will proceed along it to a short distance," replied Liripepe.

He had not gone far, however, when he roared out suddenly. "Help! help!" and rushed back as quickly as he could.

"What is the matter?" demanded Hothbrand.

"I have received a blow on the head that well-nigh stunned me," replied Liripepe.

"Didst hear anyone move?"

"I cannot say I did. The blow was sudden and violent."

"Bah! 'tis mere fancy. Thou hast knocked thy head against the wall," cried Hothbrand. "Come along."

And the rebel band marched on, greatly to the relief of those inside the passage.

As soon as the enemy was out of hearing, the fugi-

tives came forth, and again pursued their onward course.

Though deprived of the torchlight, they proceeded far more expeditiously than heretofore, their fears accelerating their movements. The fugitives had every reason to apprehend the speedy return of the rebels, as they knew the latter would be stopped by the iron gates.

Another ground of apprehension existed, and this was that the outlet of the subterranean passage might be watched by the enemy.

Such, however, did not prove to be the case. At the small hunting-tower in Greenwich Park, in the lower story of which the fugitives came forth from their underground journey, no one was to be seen but the persons in charge of the building.

These persons declared that no rebels had been seen near the building, nor could they comprehend how any hostile intruders could have been elsewhere, and not from the vaults beneath the tower.

Apparently, the Princess was satisfied with the explanation, though credence was not attached to it by Sir Osbert Montacute, who could not comprehend from what other point the passage could have been entered; and Baldwin, who was better informed than anyone else, entertained the same opinion.

The Princess did not remain long at the hunting-tower; but descended from the woody heights on which it was situated, to Greenwich, where the royal barge was moored.

Rejoicing at her escape, she went on board with her attendants, and gave orders that the oarsmen should proceed at once to the Tower.

As the gilded bark, propelled by twenty stout rowers, clad in the royal livery, cut its way through the then clear and beautiful river, the Princess gradually recovered her spirits, which had been sadly shaken by her perilous journey from the palace of Eltham.

Before entering the barge, her Grace, having no further occasion for an escort, dismissed Sir Osbert Montacute and all the men-at-arms.

The gallant young knight expressed his intention of returning to the palace, at all hazards, through the subterranean passage. Unless the rebels should have found some other means of exit than by the fortified sallopport, he must needs encounter them, and would attack them. If he perished, it would be in a good cause.

With this bold resolve, Sir Osbert departed.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW THE PRINCESS ARRIVED AT THE TOWER.

THE passage to the Tower in the splendid royal barge had all the charm of novelty to Editha, and the pleasant sensations awakened by the easy motion of the vessel, combined with the novelty of the various objects presented to her gaze, speedily put to flight the anxiety she had previously experienced.

The weather was delightful, and the contrast between the bright river, with the numerous barks floating upon it, and the somber passages she had just tracked, was indeed striking. Besides, she was going to the Tower, the place of all others she most desired to visit. No wonder, therefore, that she quickly recovered her spirits.

As she neared the great city, her delight and wonder increased; but when at length the mighty bridge and the royal fortress burst upon her, she could scarcely control her emotions.

The Princess perceived from her looks what was passing in her mind, but made no remark, being greatly preoccupied at the time.

For some minutes Editha's gaze had been fixed on the commanding White Tower, surmounted by the royal standard, and on the fortified towers around it, and thrilling sensations of awe and wonder were excited in her breast; but no sooner was the barge descried by the guard on St. Thomas's Tower, than trumpets were sounded loudly, and Sir Alan Murrieux, the Lieutenant, being informed that the Princess was approaching, hastened to the wharf with a large body of warders to receive her.

Before the Princess landed, Sir Simon Burley and the Baron de Gommegines had likewise reached the wharf, and the former gave her his hand as she stepped ashore.

"Your Grace is ever welcome at the Tower," said Sir Alan Murrieux, the Lieutenant, advancing to meet her; but I much fear your present visit is not of your own choosing."

"You are right, good Sir Alan," she replied. "I know not whether the news has reached you that the Baron de Vertain, Sir John Philpot, and my son, Sir John Holland, have been discomfited by the rebels?"

"I grieve to hear it, madam," replied Sir Alan; "but we had little hope that the expedition would be successful."

"All are safe, I trust?" observed Sir Simon Burley, anxiously.

"They are all at Eltham," replied the Princess; "but they are still in some danger. They have been pursued by a large body of the insurgents, who are now besieging the palace. This is the cause of my sudden flight. As the palace is surrounded by the enemy, I could only escape, with my ladies, through the subterranean passage."

"Certes, you bring bad news, madam," said Sir Simon. "Some men-at-arms and archers must be sent to aid the besieged; yet I know not how it can be safely done."

"I am ready to take the command of any party you may send," observed De Gommegines.

"Men are wanting, my lord, not leaders," rejoined Sir Simon.

"The besiegers muster about five hundred, as I understand," observed the Princess. "They have archers and cross-bowmen with them, and are under the command of the outlaw chief. Sir Eustace de Valletort has undertaken the defense of the palace."

"And better commander could not be found!" cried De Gommegines. "But he ought to have assistance. With a hundred lances these churls could be driven off."

"Eltham palace shall never be taken by them, come what may!" cried Sir Simon.

"I am glad to hear you say that, Sir Simon!" cried the Princess.

By this time all the ladies, having disembarked, were now gathering round their royal mistress. They expressed the greatest satisfaction at having exchanged the doubtful security of Eltham for the protection of an impregnable fortress like the Tower.

"Here, at least, we are safe from the rebels!" cried the Lady Egelwine.

"I never liked the Tower half so much as I do now," said the fair Agnes de Somerville. "I used to think it a dismal place; but, after the vaults of Eltham, it appears charming."

"Did you observe how the deer in the park fled at the approach of the rebels?" remarked the dark-eyed Ella de Fauconberg. "They seemed to know that the leader was a deer-stalker."

"I saw not the deer," replied the Lady Egelwine; "but I heard the ravens croak ominously."

"And I heard the bittens boom," added the blonde Hawisia.

"And I saw several birds of prey, hawks and kites, hovering above the palace," said the lovely but timorous Sybilla de Feschamp.

"All these are portents of ill," said the Lady Egelwine. "I much fear the palace is doomed to destruction."

"Have no such fears, fair damsels," observed De Gommegines, who was standing by. "Eltham is not destined to become a den of robbers. When you return thither you will find the palace uninjured."

An exclamation, which Editha could not repress, attracted the Baron's attention, and he inquired her name.

The Lady Egelwine told him, adding, "She comes from the priory at Dartford, and is a great favorite of the Princess."

"So it appears," observed De Gommegines, as, in obedience to a sign, Editha took a place behind her royal mistress.

Meanwhile Sir Simon Burley had quitted the Princess, in order to dispatch a messenger with a letter to the Lord Mayor, telling him that Eltham was beleaguered by the rebels, and praying him to bring as many men-at-arms as he could, without delay, to succor the besieged.

It devolved, therefore, on the lieutenant to conduct her Grace to St. Peter's Chapel, in the White Tower, whither she desired to repair at once to offer up thanks to heaven for her Providential deliverance. Her Grace's confessor had already gone on to the chapel.

As the Princess and her train proceeded to the inner ward Editha was enabled to take a rapid survey of certain portions of the ancient palatial fortress, and she was greatly impressed by the stern grandeur of the White Tower, which burst upon her after she had passed through the arched gateway of the Garden Tower, since known as the Bloody Tower.

Not being aware of the situation of St. Peter's Chapel, she was surprised when the Princess entered the massive donjon, and, ascending a spiral staircase, proceeded along a corridor to a door, before which stood a couple of halberdiers and an officer of the guard.

Here the Princess learnt that the King was then in the chapel, and that mass was being performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Waiting for a moment till all her attendants had assembled, she entered the sacred apartment, and, leaving her ladies in the aisles, proceeded at once to the altar, and knelt down beside the King.

Never had Editha been so much struck by any place of worship as by this wondrous chapel, with its enormous circular columns, its coved roof and gallery. To her it scarcely seemed the work of man's hand.

Having seen the Archbishop of Canterbury at the priory, she was familiar with his stately figure, but she never yet beheld him officiate at the altar, and she listened with deepest awe to his solemn accents.

Excited by the incense with which the atmosphere was laden, and by the melodious chants of the choir, she fell into a sort of trance, from which she did not entirely recover till the service was concluded.

While she was in this rapt state celestial visions seemed to pass before her, and she fancied she heard seraphic voices.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW SIR SIMON BURLEY, THE BARON DE GOMMEGINES, AND THE LORD MAYOR SET OUT TO SUCCOR THE BESIEGED AT ELTHAM PALACE.

WHEN the Princess quitted the chapel with the King, Editha followed, and being still somewhat confused, scarcely knew where she was going, though conscious she had quitted the White Tower, and entered the palace, till she found herself in a large chamber, richly furnished, and hung with tapestry.

The King graciously saluted the Court damsels; but he bestowed such marked attention on Editha, that the others were quite piqued.

But the smiles quickly fled from his Majesty's countenance, and his frivolity of manner disappeared, when he was informed by his mother of the attack upon Eltham by the rebels.

"Now, by St. George and St. Mark, this passeth all endurance!" he cried, fiercely. "Our palace attacked by this vile rabble! Cost what it may, they shall be driven off! Bid Sir Simon Burley come to me!"

"Sir Simon is mustering a troop of knights and esquires in the court, my liege!" replied the usher. "Your Majesty can see him from the window, if it pleases you to look out."

"Tis well," cried Richard. "He has anticipated my wishes. Hal!"

The exclamation was caused by the entrance of the Baron de Gommegines, fully armed.

Richard sprang forward to meet him.

"Thou hast made ready to succor the besieged at Eltham?" he cried.

"Tis true, my liege," replied the Baron; "and I am come to crave your Majesty's permission to proceed thither with Sir Simon Burley."

"Sir Simon has not asked our leave, but he hath it, and so hast thou," rejoined Richard. "I will go with you. I will lead you against these rebellious hounds! Let my horse be brought out at once! I will not stay to arm—I am impatient to be off. Farewell, madam!" he added, to his mother.

Never had Editha thought Richard looked so like a king as at that moment, and she gazed at him with admiration she had not felt before. His gesture was proud, and his eyes seemed literally to flash fire.

The Princess thought he looked like his heroic father when his breast was kindled with anger.

But though delighted with this unwonted display of spirit, she deemed it prudent to restrain him.

"My liege, you must not expose yourself to needless risk!" she said.

"I care not for the risk!" he cried, impetuously. "I will go!"

But De Gommegines ventured to oppose him.

"Her Grace is in the right, my liege," he said. "You cannot leave the Tower."

"Cannot leave!" exclaimed Richard. "Who shall hinder me?"

"I will, my liege!" said Sir Simon Burley, entering at the moment.

Clad in armor from head to heel, the old knight had a snowy plume in his helm, and a long sword attached to his girdle.

"As one of the Council of Regency," he continued in an authoritative tone, "and responsible for your Majesty's safety, I cannot allow you to leave the Tower."

For a moment Richard looked as if he would set the old knight's authority at defiance; and Editha, who watched the scene with breathless interest, thought he would break through all the trammels imposed upon him.

But Sir Simon's firmness prevailed, and in the end the young monarch, though sorely against his will, succumbed.

"I must obey you now, Sir Simon," he cried. "But a time will shortly come."

"My liege," interrupted the old knight, "that time will never come, unless those bound to watch over you fail in their duty. I know I shall incur your Majesty's displeasure by the step I am taking, but I cannot help it."

"What are you about to do?" demanded the King, sullenly.

"I am about to join the Lord Mayor, my liege, who, with a troop of loyal citizens, is waiting for me at the Bulwark Gate," replied Sir Simon. "We shall then make all haste we can to Eltham; and I hope, soon, to bring your Majesty good news."

Accompanied by the Baron de Gommegines, he then departed, leaving the King in high dudgeon.

Hoping to soothe Richard's irritation, the Princess led him to a large bay window, commanding the inner ward.

Beneath the trees then growing on the patch of green-sward in front of the Lieutenant's lodgings, was drawn up a company of nobles, knights and esquires, all glittering in complete steel, and mounted on powerful chargers, making a very goodly show.

Each of the knightly companions carried a long lance, on the summit of which fluttered a pennon. Each esquire bore a shield, emblazoned with his lord's cognizance.

Presently, Sir Simon Burley and the Baron de Gommegines came forth, and, mounting their chargers, put themselves at the head of the splendid troop.

Trumpets were then sounded, and, animated by the martial clangor, which made the battlements ring, the knightly company rode off, lowering their lances as they passed beneath the arch of the Garden Tower.

At this sight, Richard turned away in deep vexation, and, as he did so, he encountered Editha's gaze, which was anxiously fixed upon him.

He could not speak to her, but addressed his mother in words meant for the damsel's ear.

"My crown is not worth wearing if I cannot fight for it!"

"Trouble not yourself on that score, my liege," replied the Princess. "These churls are unworthy of your sword. Leave others to deal with them."

On issuing from the Bulwark Gate, Sir Simon Burley and his noble companions found the Lord Mayor, with a troop of well-mounted and well-armed citizens, waiting for them.

Sir William Walworth was cased in mail, but did not bear a lance, like the knights attendant upon Sir Simon. In lieu thereof, he had a mallet affixed to his saddle-bow, and, with his strong arm, he was well able to use the heavy weapon.

Sir Simon heartily thanked the Lord Mayor, in the King's name, for his prompt and efficient response to the summons; after which, the two companies rode off together.

When they had crossed London Bridge, they set spurs to their steeds, and dashed off at a gallop along the road to Blackheath and Eltham, burning to punish the presumptuous rebels.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT BEFEL SIR OSBERT MONTACUTE ON HIS RETURN THROUGH THE SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGE.

ON re-entering the subterranean passage, Sir Osbert Montacute and the men-at-arms with him did not light the torches, but proceeded, as noiselessly as they could,

along the gloomy road, in the hope of passing the intruders unperceived.

They had gone in this manner for some time, without meeting with any interruption, when a distant sound reached the ears of Baldwin, who was marching in advance, and he called to the others, in a low tone, to stop.

"I will go on alone to reconnoitre," he whispered to Sir Osbert.

Some minutes elapsed, and as he did not return, Sir Osbert became exceedingly uneasy.

The state of suspense in which he was kept was well-nigh intolerable. Vainly did he peer into the gloom—vainly listen. He could hear nothing—see nothing.

Just as he had resolved to move on, he became aware that some one was near him, and thinking it must be the guide come back, he said, in a low voice, "Is it thou, Baldwin?"

Instead of answering, the person would have retreated, had not Sir Osbert seized him by the throat, and held him fast.

"Attempt to give the alarm, and I will kill thee!" said the knight, feeling sure he had captured a rebel. "Where are thy comrades?" he added, slightly relaxing his grasp.

"They are trying to get out of this accursed place," replied the man. "They are dispersed. Some have fallen into a pit in the darkness, and are unable to get out."

A smothered laugh arose from the men-at-arms at this satisfactory intelligence.

"But where are the rest?" demanded Sir Osbert.

"'Tis a question difficult to answer," replied the prisoner, evasively, "seeing that I know not where I am myself."

"Are they in this passage?" demanded Sir Osbert, sternly. "Thou canst tell that. Thou hadst best not trifle with me, fellow. Thy name is known to me—thou art called Liripipe."

"Certes, my name is Liripipe," replied the prisoner, surprised.

"I recollect thy voice," said Sir Osbert. "Now mark me, Liripipe! Thou shalt go on with us. If we avoid thy comrades, I will spare thee. If we meet them, thou shalt die! Take heed—my poniard is at thy throat!"

Still keeping fast hold of the prisoner, Sir Osbert compelled him to retrace his steps; but before they had got far, a noise announced that several persons were coming quickly towards them.

"They are here!" said Liripipe. "What is to be done?"

"Bid them go back instantly," replied Sir Osbert. "Say that the enemy is at hand! Shout lustily!"

Liripipe called out as he was enjoined; whereupon the rebels immediately stopped.

"Tell them to fly, and conceal themselves, or they will certainly be captured!" whispered Sir Osbert.

Liripipe obeyed, and the sound of retreating footsteps was immediately heard.

"May I follow them?" implored the prisoner. "By St. Babylas of Antioch, I will not betray you!"

"I have not done with thee yet," replied Sir Osbert, slightly pricking him with the poniard. "Keep near me!"

They then moved on slowly; for Sir Osbert had to drag the prisoner along.

Once more footsteps were heard, but they proved to be those of a friend. Next moment Baldwin came up, and announced himself.

"I did not think I should have been able to rejoin you, Sir Osbert," he said. "The rebels got hold of me, but I managed to escape while they were retreating by a side-passage."

"Is the main passage clear?" asked the knight.

"I think so," replied Baldwin. "But the villains may return."

"Forward, then!" cried Sir Osbert. "Not a moment is to be lost!"

The party then set off at a quick pace, and soon reached the outer gate, which was unlocked by Baldwin.

In fulfillment of his promise, Sir Osbert here liberated the prisoner; but he told him, if he was again captured, he should assuredly be hanged.

"Say to thy comrades we will soon come in search of them," added Baldwin; "and woe betide them if they are caught!"

Liripipe scarcely heard the words, though he guessed their import, but hurried off as fast as his legs could carry him.

Having carefully fastened both gates, the party made their way to the subterranean chamber.

In another minute, the trapdoor was opened for them by the guard, but not till he was satisfied they were friends.

As Sir Osbert came forth, his first inquiry was, "How goes the siege?"

"I can scarce tell, my lord," replied the guard. "The rebels have gained none of the outworks, but they still obstinately continue the attack. The archers, I hear, are under the command of a certain Conrad Basset."

"I know the man you speak of, and 'tis like enough he may be their leader," said Sir Osbert. "Where is Sir John Holland?"

"Half an hour ago he was on the north battlements, my lord, and doubtless he is there still," rejoined the guard.

"Then I will go to him at once," cried Sir Osbert. "Come with me, all of you," he added, to Baldwin and the men-at-arms.

So saying, he hurried off to the battlements, but before he reached them, loud shouts and other noises, accompanied ever and anon by the blast of a trumpet, informed him that an assault was being made by the besiegers, and vigorously repelled by the defenders of the palace.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW ELTHAM PALACE WAS VALIANTLY DEFENDED BY SIR JOHN PHILPOT.

THE attack, which had commenced, as previously related, at the precise moment of the Princess's departure from the palace, had now lasted for more than two hours, without any material advantage to the assailants.

The royal residence, as we have already explained, was capable of making a stout defense, being entirely surrounded by fortified walls, and a wide, deep moat.

The moat was crossed by two stone bridges, respectively situated on the north and south of the palace, and protected by a barbican.

The chief attack of the assailants was directed against the north barbican, which was guarded by a dozen archers and cross-bowmen, under the command of Sir John Philpot, who had sought this post as being that of the greatest danger.

And well did the brave knight prove his skill and valor. Twice were the insurgents successfully repulsed by him, when they advanced on foot, and in great numbers, to attack the barbican, and though he sustained some slight losses, they were nothing in comparison with the damage done by him to the foe.

Conrad Basset was made a mark by the cross-bowmen and archers on the barbican, but he escaped without injury, owing to the vigilance of a gigantic woman, who stood by his side, and carefully guarded him from harm.

This amazon wore a breastplate that must have been fashioned for a strongly-built man, and in addition to a broad-bladed sword, carried a large triangular shield, with which she ward off many a shaft and bolt aimed at Conrad.

While these assaults were made, the outlaw was not idle, but gave all the support he could to his friends.

Sheltered by the wood, and without much risk to the large party of archers with him, he sent constant showers of arrows against those on the battlements.

After the unsuccessful issue of the second attack, Conrad Basset repaired to the wood, where a brief conference took place between him and the outlaw.

Somewhat discouraged, Conrad expressed an opinion that it was useless to make a further attempt.

"We have got a most resolute and skillful opponent in Sir John Philpot," he said. "He will hold the barbican to the last. I should not have cared for Sir John Holland, but Philpot is a very different man."

"True," replied the outlaw, "but he is not invincible; and if you defeat him, so much greater will be the honor. Rather than the siege should be abandoned, I will lead the attack myself."

Conrad might have agreed to the proposition, though it was mortifying to his pride, but Frideswide, who had followed him into the wood, and stood at a little distance, leaning on her sword, called out, in a tone that scarcely admitted of dispute:

"Do not relinquish your post! Despite Sir John Philpot, the barbican can easily be taken, and I will tell you how."

"Show me the way, and I will thank thee heartily," rejoined Conrad.

"This is my plan," said Frideswide. "You want a battering-ram. I will supply you with one. Not fifty yards from this spot lies a huge beam. I noticed it as I came hither. 'Twill take a dozen men to lift it, but I will help them, if need be."

"Ha! I see!" cried Conrad, joyfully. "With this beam thou wouldst burst open the postern?"

"That is my plan," said Frideswide. "When the postern is burst open, as it will be of a surety by this simple battering-ram, who is to prevent thee from entering the barbican? Not Sir John Philpot!"

"No, by St. Anselm, not twenty Philpots!" cried Conrad. "Thou hast devised an excellent plan. The barbican once gained, the palace will be ours!"

"Ay marry, will it!" said the outlaw. "When we have crossed the bridge, and appear before the gate, Sir Eustace de Valletort will be forced to surrender. Besides the plunder to be gained, the capture of a royal palace like Eltham, will be of immense service to the cause, and strike terror into the breast of the nobles."

"Let not the final assault be delayed!" cried Conrad, who was full of ardor and impatience. "If we triumph, it will be owing to thee," he added, to Frideswide.

She spoke no word, but her look implied, "The suggestion was made to please thee."

Another assault being resolved upon, horses were brought, and ropes fastened to the ponderous beam which was found lying in the spot indicated by Frideswide.

This done, the improvised battering-ram was dragged towards the barbican, but kept under cover of the trees till it should be required.

Very little delay occurred. Conrad Basset, as we have just remarked, being now all impatience for a fresh assault, in which he might retrieve his past ill success.

Again trumpets were sounded by the insurgents—again the challenge was scornfully answered by the defenders of the barbican, and still more scornfully by those on the battlements—after which a large party of rebels, headed by Conrad Basset, who was accompanied by the amazon, again advanced to the assault.

A thick and continuous flight of arrows from the archers in the wood tended to confuse the besieged as the assailants came on, and some of the defenders of the barbican having disappeared, the order was given by Conrad to bring on the battering-ram.

In another minute the great beam was dragged by the horses as close as it could be to the tower, and in spite of shafts, bolts, and missiles directed against them, it was laid hold of by some twenty sturdy yeomen, and in

another minute propelled with resistless force against the now easily assailable postern.

One blow of this tremendous engine was sufficient.

The strong oaken door, though strengthened with iron, and secured with bolts and bars, yielded, and Conrad, still attended by Frideswide, rushed into the tower, followed by as many archers as could get in with him.

A desperate conflict now took place in the lower chamber of the barbican.

Every inch was disputed with the assailants. More than once Sir John Philpot drove them back, killing or wounding a rebel with every blow of his trenchant sword.

Conrad would undoubtedly have fallen by his hand, but for the interposition of Frideswide. Even in that fierce struggle, the valiant knight, seeing he had to deal with a woman, forbore to strike.

At length, being left almost alone—for nearly all the men-at-arms with him were down—Sir John was compelled to retreat.

Facing the foe to the last, he passed out at the rear of the tower by a door communicating with the bridge; but being instantly followed by Conrad, Frideswide, and a score of rebels, armed with pikes and gisarnes, he stopped, and courageously confronted the whole host.

At this critical juncture the gate of the palace was thrown open, and Sir Eustace de Valletort, Sir John Holland, the Baron de Vertain, Sir Osbert Montacute, and a dozen men-at-arms sallied forth to the rescue.

Driven back by the fierce onslaught of the nobles, the rebels were immediately reinforced by great numbers of their comrades, who rushed in through the barbican gate, and Conrad returned to the attack.

Another desperate fight then took place in the center of the bridge. For a few minutes nothing could be heard but the clash of arms, mingled with shouts, yells, and groans. Several of the rebels were thrown over the bridge into the moat.

Little assistance could be rendered to Sir Eustace by those on the walls, because they were exposed to a continuous flight of arrows from the archers whom the outlaw had now brought to the very verge of the moat.

Despite the superior skill of the knights, they were so greatly outnumbered by the assailants, that Sir Eustace felt it would be impossible to maintain the bridge much longer, and he was, therefore, preparing for a final effort before re-entering the palace, when the sound of a trumpet was heard in the distance.

At the same moment, loud and joyous shouts arose from those on the battlements.

From their elevated position on the walls the men-at-arms could descry a clump of spears galloping along the avenue in the direction of the palace, and they therefore called out, "A rescue! a rescue!"

CHAPTER XX.

HOW THE PALACE WAS DELIVERED.

GUESSING the cause of the shouts, Conrad Basset, who up to this moment had felt sure of victory, checked the further advance of his companions, and his dismay was increased when warning cries arose from the party stationed on the outer side of the moat.

"To horse! to horse!" vociferated the insurgent archers.

"The enemy is at hand!"

"Fall back instantly and mount your steeds!" shouted Conrad to those behind him; and the order was repeated by Frideswide.

Finding the rebels were retreating, Sir Eustace and the knights dashed upon them, and in a marvelously short space of time the bridge was entirely cleared of the assailants.

Sir Eustace did not deem it prudent to follow up his advantage, but reoccupied the barbican, and caused the gate to be closed.

The first aim of the rebels on quitting the bridge was to regain their horses, and this was quickly accomplished, since the animals were tied to the trees at the upper end of the avenue.

While Conrad was getting together the disorderly rout, Frideswide brought him his steed, and having already secured her own horse, lent the young man great aid in his troublesome task.

All necessary arrangements were made with surprising celerity, and before the knight could come up the rebel host, slightly diminished in numbers, but still presenting a very formidable appearance, was fully prepared to receive them.

Such of the insurgents as were provided with pikes were placed in the foremost ranks of the battalion, and their leaders strenuously enjoined them to stand firm.

Close to Conrad was the faithful Frideswide, who looked as undaunted as the young chief himself.

In another moment the charge was made. At the head of the party rode Sir Simon Burley and De Gommegines, shouting their battle-cry as they couched their lances.

The shock was tremendous and resistless. Bearing down all before them, unhorsing numbers, and trampling them under foot, splintering the pikes as if they had been willow-wands, the knights divided the compact mass in twain, and scattered the rebels in every direction, so that they could not reunite.

All this was the work of a few minutes.

Luckily for themselves, the two rebel leaders avoided the shock; but they saw at once that it would be impossible to rally their terror-stricken followers, who were now flying wildly off, and trying to save themselves by plunging amid the trees on either side of the avenue.

For a few moments, Conrad remained stupefied by the disastrous result of the charge; but he was at length roused by Frideswide, who remained with him.

"See'st thou not that thy brother chief is gone?" she said.

"He called to thee to fly, but thou didst not heed."

"I did not hear him call," replied Conrad, bitterly. "I did not see him depart. Why has he fled?"

"Because all is lost," rejoined Frideswide. "Not a man of all the host is left to stand by thee. Fly, or thou wilt be slain by these fierce knights."

"No, I will stand my ground!" he exclaimed fiercely, but despairingly. "If I must die, I will die here."

"Thou shalt not throw away thy life thus," she cried.

And seizing the bridle of his steed, she forced him away.

Their flight was perceived, and three knights instantly started in pursuit.

But both Conrad and his companions were well mounted, and the instinct of self-preservation having resumed its sway over the young man, he yielded to Frideswide's suggestion, and made for the forest lying between Eltham and Dartford.

This shelter gained, they were safe from pursuit. "Nothing more is to be done here," said Conrad. "I will rejoin Wat Tyler at Rochester."

"Be it so," replied the submissive Frideswide. Thus was the beleaguered palace of Eltham delivered. Though the majority of the rebels escaped, numbers were slain. No prisoners were made.

The knights slew all who fell into their hands. When the good news was brought them of the defeat of the rebels, the King and his mother were greatly rejoiced.

A banquet was given that evening at the royal palace at the Tower, at which Sir Simon Burley, the Baron de Gemme-gines, the Lord Mayor, and other nobles and knights assisted.

END OF BOOK THE SECOND.

BOOK THE THIRD.

BLACKHEATH.

CHAPTER I.

THE SIEGE OF ROCHESTER CASTLE.

WHILE the events just recounted took place, Rochester Castle was besieged by the main body of the rebels, who were supplied by the town's people with scaling-ladders, battering-rams, and mangonels, the latter being an extremely powerful engine, used at the time for hurling large stones against the walls or gates of a fortress.

Many of the town's people likewise assisted in the assault, which was begun without delay; and though justly accounted one of the strongest in the kingdom, it seemed unlikely the castle could long hold out against such a multitude of assailants.

Other circumstances warranted this conclusion. Not only was the fortress insufficiently garrisoned, but the Constable, Sir John de Newtoun, had reason to doubt the fidelity of his men.

Thinking to intimidate the rest, and prevent any acts of insubordination or treachery, he not only hanged Thurstan, the burgher of Gravesend, who had been sent to him by Sir Simon Burley, and whom the rebels had sworn to release, but five archers suspected of sedition, and suspended the bodies from the lofty towers of the keep, in sight of the enemy.

But the Constable's severity produced the contrary effect to that intended. It heightened the spirit of mutiny, instead of quelling it, and caused the insurgents to redouble their efforts to take the place.

Hence, a siege that might have endured for months lasted only a couple of days.

On the first assault, scaling-ladders of immense length were affixed to the great partition-wall of the castle, and party after party of assailants mounted them, but were unable to gain the battlements.

Huge stones were thrown, with prodigious force, against the gates from the mangonels and battering-rams, each worked by a score of stalwart individuals, were employed; but no entrance could be effected, and, after hours of fruitless labor, attended by great loss, the insurgents were compelled to retire.

During the night some secret communication must have taken place between the seditious garrison and the rebels; for next morning the latter, instead of preparing to renew the assault, made ready to enter the fortress in triumph.

The royal standard, which had hitherto floated proudly on the summit of the keep, was taken down and replaced by a white flag. The drawbridge was lowered, and the gates thrown wide open to admit the insurgents, who marched in, headed by Wat Tyler, fully armed and mounted on a powerful steed.

On entering the base-court, they found Sir John de Newtoun a prisoner, and guarded by a party of his own men-at-arms.

Eyeing Wat Tyler fiercely, he said to him: "Base varlet, thou hast won the castle by treachery. Never would I have surrendered it to thee."

"Go to, proud knight," rejoined Wat. "Thou has learnt, to thy cost, that the strongest fortress cannot resist the people when banded together."

"No fortress is safe when garrisoned by traitors," said the Constable, scornfully.

"I will not parley with thee!" cried Wat. "Richly dost thou deserve death at our hands for thy misdeeds and cruelty. Yet are we willing to spare thy life if thou wilt join us."

"Join you!" cried the Constable. "Darest thou make such a proposition to me, vile churl? Dost think I would dishonor myself by joining such a company of false traitors and knaves as thee and thy fellows? Undecieve thyself. Give me my sword; and then come on, all of you, and put me to death, if you can!"

"We have not done with thee yet," rejoined Wat Tyler. "Whether thou wilt join the league or not, thou shalt go with me. I have certain propositions to make to the King, and thou shalt act as my ambassador."

"Dost thou expect me to bring back his Majesty's answer to thee?" demanded the Constable.

"Assuredly," replied Wat; "and thou must pledge thy word to return."

After a moment's reflection, Sir John de Newtoun said: "I will do as you desire, provided you will forthwith liberate my wife and children."

"I cannot liberate them now," said Wat Tyler. "I shall hold them as hostages for the due fulfillment of thy promise. When thou dost bring back the King's answer, whether it be favorable or otherwise, I will set them free."

"Enough!" said the Constable. "I will do thy bidding."

At a sign from Wat Tyler, he was then removed by the guard, and placed in a strong-room.

The rebel leader then dismounted, and, attended by Hothbrand and several others, proceeded to the Baron's Hall, a noble chamber, which, with its three massive columns and grand arches, presented a fine specimen of Norman architecture.

Within this magnificent hall, where the Constable had dined daily during his long tenure of the post, and where he had constantly entertained nobles and knights, a banquet was spread for the rebel leader and his companions.

Before partaking of it, however, Wat Tyler descended to a large, gloomy dungeon, situated immediately beneath the Baron's Hall, wherein several State prisoners were confined, and liberated them.

He also caused all the other captives immured in the great tower to be set free.

He then returned to the banquet; and while he and his companions feasted, the castle was plundered by the insurgents and the town's people.

Two hours afterwards, the rebel army, now enormously augmented, quitted Rochester, and commenced its march towards London.

By Wat Tyler's express command, Sir John de Newtoun was furnished with a charger, and not even guarded, since he had pledged his word not to attempt his escape; but of course he was deprived of his arms.

Throughout the march he maintained a haughty deportment, and refused to converse with his captors.

Slow progress was made by the insurgents. They stopped to plunder every castle and mansion on the road, putting all

who resided there to the sword, and committing other atrocious acts.

All men of law, justices, and questors, whom they caught, were beheaded, by order of John Ball, who told the peasants and serfs they would never enjoy their native and true liberty till all magistrates, lawyers, and proctors were despatched.

Moreover, the crafty monk commanded them to burn and destroy all records, evidences, court-rolls, and other muni-ments, that their landlords might not be able to claim any right hereafter. These precautions taken, they believed themselves secure.

Many persons, who would fain have avoided them, were arrested, and compelled to take the oath of fidelity to the league.

Numbers of others, likewise, flocked to the rebel standard; men in debt flying from their creditors, common robbers, sturdy beggars, outlaws, and desperadoes of all sorts.

Of such nefarious characters, whose main object was plunder, a considerable portion of the enormous host was now composed; and, as may well be supposed, it required great vigor and determination on the part of the leaders to control such an undisciplined and tumultuous army.

After a march, marked by rapine and bloodshed, the vast insurgent host reached Dartford Brent, where they met the Outlaw and Conrad Basset and his men returning from the unsuccessful siege of Eltham Palace.

Wat Tyler and John Ball were greatly enraged when they heard of the disaster, but they felt no blame could reasonably be attached to the Outlaw.

Not willing to take the overwhelming host into Dartford, Wat Tyler ordered a halt for the night on the plain; and the numerous purveyors having just returned with a plentiful supply of provisions and wine, the insurgents had no inducement to plunder the village, but were content to remain where they were.

CHAPTER II.

WAT TYLER REVISITS DARTFORD.

LEAVING the army to the care of the Outlaw, Hothbrand, and some of the subordinates, the rebel leader rode down into the village.

Attended by Conrad and Frideswide, and followed by a large mounted escort, among whom were Liripe, Courthouse, Grouthead, and others of the Dartford men, he rode slowly on—his banner of St. George being borne by Frideswide, and trumpets were sounded loudly as he crossed the bridge over the Brent.

At the same time, the bells of the church rang joyfully, and the priests of St. Edmund's Chapel, who were alarmed for their safety, came forth, and, falling on their knees before him, humbly implored his protection.

"Rest easy, good fathers," said Wat. "I have said that no one in Dartford shall be injured in person or property, and be assured I will faithfully keep my word."

Thereupon, the priests, taking courage, arose and gave him their blessing.

After this momentary halt, Wat Tyler and his followers rode on, and were greeted with such feeble acclamations as could be raised by the old folks, women, and children.

Swollen with pride and success, and commanding an enormous army that implicitly obeyed all his behests, Wat Tyler had assumed a haughty, even arrogant mien, very different from his former deportment.

In fact, he scarcely looked like the same individual; and when Baldock came forth from the hostel to salute him, he was amazed by the extraordinary change in his appearance. The bewildered host made him an obeisance as profound as he would have rendered to the highest noble.

Not displeased by the homage, which he thought his due, Wat addressed the host in a condescending tone.

"Thou seest I have returned in triumph, Baldock," he said. "I have now seventy thousand brave followers on Dartford Brent—seventy thousand! What dost thou think of that?"

"I think it wonderful, my lord," replied Baldock, again bowing obsequiously. "Yet 'tis only what I expected."

"I am receiving constant accessions," replied the rebel leader. "Before I reach London I doubt not my army will number a hundred thousand. Thus supported, the King, with whom I am about to confer, cannot refuse my demands!"

"I account them already granted, my lord," rejoined Baldock.

"Mark me, Baldock," continued Wat Tyler. "A week hence there will be no council—no chancellor—no treasurer—no hierarchy—no nobles—no knights! The Commonalty of England will be supreme!"

"And you will govern the Commonalty, my lord?" observed Baldock. "Of necessity you must exercise almost sovereign sway, since the King is yet too young to rule."

"Truly, Richard will need a counsellor, like myself, to attend to the welfare of the people," said Wat. "Whatever power I possess will be exerted in behalf of the inhabitants of Dartford. Fare thee well, good Baldock; I am now about to pay a visit to the Prioreess."

"A word ere you depart, my lord," remarked the host, with some hesitation. "You are aware that your dame is now staying at the Priory? You may not care to meet her?"

"Nay; I must needs see her," said Wat, knitting his brows; "though it will be for the last time!"

As he passed the green, he threw a glance at the smithy, and at the cottage adjoining it. Both places were deserted.

While looking at them, he thought of former days; but the recollection was not pleasant.

Heretofore Wat Tyler had never entered the court of the Priory, save on foot, and alone. Now, his followers filled the place.

At his loud and peremptory summons, Sister Eudoxia came to the portal, looking dreadfully frightened.

"Be not alarmed, good sister," he said. "Neither the Lady Superior nor any of the nuns shall be molested. None of my followers shall enter the Priory. But I desire to speak with the Lady Isabel."

"I cannot admit thee till I have consulted our holy mother," replied Sister Eudoxia.

She then disappeared; but presently returned, saying that the Prioreess would grant him an interview.

Chancing to notice Frideswide at the same time, Sister Eudoxia added, "If that is a woman, she may enter with thee."

Thereupon, Wat Tyler and Frideswide dismounted, leaving their horses with Conrad, and the Amazon was taken to the refectory by some of the nuns, who were struck with wonder at her gigantic stature; while the rebel leader was conducted to the locutory, where were the Lady Isabel and his wife.

The Prioreess was seated in the large oak chair when he entered, and, being greatly offended by his haughty deportment and overbearing manner, did not feel disposed to rise and receive him.

He scarcely noticed his wife, who gazed at him in astonishment, not unmixed with anger.

"Holy mother! you have doubtless heard of the great success of the insurrection?" he said.

"I have heard that the rebels under thy command have done much mischief, and plundered many religious houses?" rejoined the Prioreess, coldly. "Thou art bound in gratitude to respect this convent."

"I mean to respect it!" said Wat. "I am come to speak to you, holy mother, respecting Editha. I mean to take her with me."

"Take her with thee!" exclaimed his wife. "I would never consent to such a step. Luckily, thou canst not execute thy wicked design. Editha has left the convent, and is now under the care of the Princess."

"Under the care of the Princess!" cried Wat, with a look of disappointment and vexation. "Thou didst wrong to part with her without my consent—which would have been refused," he added to the Prioreess. "I had other designs for her."

"What designs?" demanded the Lady Isabel, uneasily.

"I meant to make her Queen of England!" rejoined Wat.

"Hold thy peace!" cried his wife. "Thou art mad to talk thus!"

"Nay; by my troth!" rejoined Wat. "'Tis no visionary scheme, as you shall find. I will take her from the Princess, and force the young King to wed her!"

"And think'st thou, presumptuous man, that such an alliance will be permitted?" remarked the Prioreess. "I tell thee no!"

"And I say 'Yea!'" cried Wat, in a tone of thunder, that made his listeners tremble. "My word is now law, and I will have it so. My daughter shall be wedded to the King!"

"Thy daughter!" exclaimed the Lady Isabel, indignantly. Then checking herself suddenly, she added, "Thou wilt not sacrifice her thus! Were thy insane scheme carried out, it would be fatal to her!"

"Ay, truly would it," said Dame Tyler. "The King would repudiate her."

"Not while I am what I am!" rejoined the rebel leader, sternly.

"Thy pride will bring thee to destruction, thou headstrong and mistaken man!" said the Prioreess in a tone of severe rebuke. "As thou would'st live hereafter, I charge thee not to meddle with Editha!"

"I am not to be turned from my fixed purpose!" he rejoined. "All I have hitherto attempted has succeeded, and this will not fail. I shall wed my daughter to the King."

Disregarding his wife's prayers and entreaties, and the Prioreess's expressions of anger, he quitted the locutory, and strode along the corridor to the porch.

Frideswide went forth at the same time with him. Just as he was about to mount his steed, his wife rushed out, exclaiming, distractedly:

"Would'st cast me off, Wat?—would'st cast me off?"

"Begone! thou art unsuited to me, woman!" he rejoined, harshly.

"Unsuited or not, I will go with thee!" she rejoined, trying to cling to him.

But Frideswide thrust her back, and Wat Tyler, without bestowing another look upon the unhappy woman, rode off, and, followed by his attendants, returned at once to Dartford Brent.

CHAPTER III.

THE HERMIT'S WARNING.

A SUMPTUOUS tent, part of the plunder of Rochester Castle, was pitched for Wat Tyler in the center of the plain; but, though fatigued, he felt little inclination for slumber, and after disencumbering himself of the heaviest portion of his armor, and placing his sword by his side, he merely threw himself on the couch.

A lamp, hanging from the top, illumined the interior of the tent.

It might be about two hours after midnight, when Wat, who had sunk into a troubled doze, was roused by a noise outside; and, as he started up and seized his sword, the folds of the tent were thrown back, and Frideswide, fully armed, stood before him.

"What brings thee here at this hour?" demanded the rebel leader.

"First, learn that thy drunken sentinels are worse than naught, being both fast asleep," she rejoined. "I spurned them with my foot, but could not wake them. A traitor might have slain thee sleeping, had he chosen."

"To thy business," said Wat.

"There is a holy hermit without, who would fain speak with thee. He calls himself Friar Gawan. I discovered him moving like a specter among the slumbering host; and, finding he was seeking thy tent, I brought him hither."

"Admit him. I know the holy man."

Next moment, the hermit, who was waiting outside the tent, was introduced.

As he entered, he threw back his cowl.

His conductress would have withdrawn, but Wat Tyler bade her remain.

"I would speak with thee alone, my son," said the friar.

"It cannot be, holy brother," replied Wat. "Heed not the presence of this courageous damsel. She can keep a secret as well as a man."

"Better," observed Frideswide.

"Thou hearest. Say on."

"Then blame me not if I offend thee," replied the hermit. "I have had a vision in my cell, and thy fate has been revealed to me."

"My fate!" exclaimed Wat.

"Art thou prepared to hear it?" demanded the hermit, solemnly.

"Yea," replied the rebel leader. "I shrink not from the knowledge."

"Then learn that, before another week, thou wilt die a bloody death!"

A chill, as of the grave, fell upon Wat, and seemed to benumb his faculties.

For nearly a minute he scarcely drew breath, but remained staring fixedly at the hermit.

Seeing the effect produced, Frideswide stepped up, and shook him roughly.

"Be thyself!" she cried. "Be not troubled by the foolish talk of this visionary friar! I would not have brought him to thee had I guessed his errand. Shall I take him hence?"

"Listen to me ere thou dost dismiss me," said the hermit. "Quit this rebellious host before daybreak, and thy life may yet be spared."

"Wilt thou do that?" cried Frideswide, to the rebel leader.

"Thou art not what I deem thee if thou wilt. Thou hast an army, with which thou canst exterminate all the nobles of the land, and raise thee up a sovereignty as thou choosest. Wilt thou abandon it at the word of a driveling friar?"

"No!" cried Wat Tyler, springing to his feet, and glaring fiercely at the hermit. "I see through thy design, false priest! Thou art sent to frighten me back by idle warnings. I laugh at them. I will march on courageously as ever. Nor will I pause till I have reached the mark at which I aim."

"March on, then, proud man, and meet thy doom," said the hermit. "I have warned thee."

And he turned to depart.

"Stay!" cried Wat. "Confess thou wert sent to me by the Prioreess of St. Mary."

"I was sent to thee by thy deserted wife, to whom I related the vision," replied the hermit.

"I guessed as much," said Wat. "Begone!"

"Shall he be allowed to go free?" asked Frideswide.

"Ay; and do thou convey him to the outskirts of the camp," replied Wat. "I would not harm should come to him."

Friar Gawen fixed an earnest, imploring look on the rebel leader; but seeing no change in his looks, he quitted the tent with Frideswide.

About half an hour afterwards, Wat Tyler, having put on his armor, and girded on his sword, went forth. The sentinels were still sleeping at the door of the tent; but he did not disturb them.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OUTLAW ACCEPTS THE COMMAND OF THE ESSEX BATTALION.

It must be borne in mind that the season when the march of the rebels took place, was not far from midsummer, when the nights are shortest, and ordinarily so fine and warm, that there can be no great hardship in sleeping upon a heath without other cover than the sky.

By the gray light of earliest dawn, which gave additional effect to the extraordinary picture presented to him, Wat Tyler beheld thousands upon thousands of peasants lying stretched upon the ground in every direction, almost the whole of the countless host being still buried in slumber.

Some few were astir, and here and there a watch-fire was blazing, the yellow flame contrasting with the gray glimmer of dawn; but the general appearance of the plain was that of an immense battle-field, thickly strewn with corpses of the slain.

This idea occurred to Wat as he gazed around, and filled him for a time with somber presentiments.

Not having altogether shaken off the effect of the hermit's warning, he could not repress the dread thought that ere a single week had passed, that enormous host might be scattered and destroyed, and he himself, their haughty leader, gone.

Occupied by such reflections, he almost insensibly quitted the camp, and was walking slowly on, when he heard a shout behind him, and turning, perceived the outlaw galloping towards him, accompanied by two other persons on horseback, whom he did not recognize.

Seeing his brother chief was in quest of him, he immediately stopped, and next moment the outlaw and his companions came up.

"I have been to thy tent," said Jack Straw, "and not finding thee there, have come in quest of thee. A message has just been brought me by our friends here, Rochford and Thurrock," he continued, pointing to the two individuals with him, "to the effect that ten thousand trusty Essex men are ready and eager to join us, but are unable to cross the river."

"Tis true," said Rochford. "Since they cannot come to us, I will go to them," pursued Jack Straw, "and put myself at their head. How say you, brother? Have I determined aright?"

"Ay, marry," replied Wat Tyler. "You will bring the battalion round to the north side of London. We shall thus completely environ the city."

"Such is my design," said the outlaw; "and I had already imparted it to my friends here."

Rochford and Thurrock bowed, and the latter said: "The vessel in which we crossed awaits us in Dartford Creek. Our confederates are stationed near Barking."

"My chief concern is that I cannot capture Eltham Palace," observed the outlaw.

"The palace will fall into our hands hereafter," said Wat. "I shall not waste time in besieging it now."

"Then all is settled," cried Jack Straw. "To-morrow morn, if all goes well, I shall have brought my battalion to Hampstead Heath, and shall fix my tent on the highest point of the hill, whence I can survey London, which will shortly be in our power. Farewell!"

So saying, he galloped off with his companions, and dashing down the sloping sides of the hill, proceeded to the creek, where they embarked with their horses in the vessel waiting for them, and crossed the Thames to Purfleet.

CHAPTER V.

ELTHAM PALACE IS SURRENDERED TO THE REBELS.

By this time the sun had risen, and with a splendor that gave assurance of a glorious day.

Roused by the enlivening beams, the whole host was speedily astir. Where all had been silent as the grave a short time before, thousands of voices were now heard.

On returning to his tent, Wat Tyler mounted his steed, and accompanied by Conrad Basset and Frideswide, both of whom were on horseback, began to inspect the host.

Descrying John Ball at a distance, he joined him, and found that he was about to preach to the assemblage.

Externally the monk was unchanged. He was still a barefooted friar—still wore a gray gown, and tied a cord round his waist.

He had brought with him a portable pulpit from Rochester, and this pulpit, which was more than twenty feet high, being placed in a convenient spot, he quitted his mule, and ascended it, while Wat Tyler, and those with him, stationed themselves below.

From this elevated stage, the monk could survey the whole host, and he looked around for a few minutes till a general silence prevailed, and then commenced his discourse.

Possessing a stentorian voice, he made himself heard at a considerable distance, and as he justified the proceedings of the insurgents, he was listened to with attention, and even applauded.

At the close of his sermon, he called upon the assemblage to join in prayer; and the injunction being reiterated in every direction, the entire host knelt down.

Nothing could be more striking than the spectacle afforded by the vast kneeling multitude; but the effect of a hymn, subsequently sung, and in which thousands of rude, untutored voices joined, was sublime.

Having finished their devotions, the peasants began to prepare for their morning meal, and numerous fires were lighted at which provisions were cooked.

Meanwhile the leaders proceeded to the tent in which Sir John de Newtoun was confined; but, having satisfied themselves that he was safe, they did not care to question him.

A conference was then held between Wat Tyler and the monk, and some changes were made, consequent upon the departure of the Outlaw.

Conrad Basset was appointed to the command of a battalion, and Hothbrand had a similar command bestowed upon him by Wat Tyler, who promoted all his own favorites.

It must be mentioned that a strong feeling of jealousy had arisen of late between the two rebel chiefs, and Wat Tyler by no means regretted the absence of one whom he had begun to regard as a rival.

So much had to be done, and so many delays occurred, that two or three hours elapsed before the army was ready to march.

At length, however, it set forth. Ill-disciplined, tumultuous, and scarcely to be controlled by its leaders, the host was imposing from its magnitude.

Though no halt took place in Dartford, and though the men marched quickly, upwards of an hour elapsed between the appearance of the head of the first division on the brow of the hill, and the descent of the last battalion.

The men were armed, as we have previously stated, with

every description of weapon—scythes, flails, and reaping-hooks included; but glsarmes, long pikes, and brown bills predominated. Banners of St. George and pennons were borne by each company.

Wat Tyler rode at the head of the army, and no noble could have assumed a haughtier deportment than did the rebel leader. He scarcely deigned to notice the respectful salutations of the villagers, and responded with a proud gesture to Baldock's profound obeisance.

However, he gave strict orders that the priory was not to be injured; and while he placed a guard at the gates to enforce obedience to his commands, his wife rushed forth, and endeavored to throw herself at his feet, but she was kept back.

The onward march of the insurgents was characterized by its customary atrocities. Several habitations were plundered at Crayford and Bexley, and their owners put to death.

Although Wat Tyler had told his brother chief that he would not stay to besiege Eltham Palace, he sent Conrad Basset to summon the garrison to surrender, threatening to put them to the sword if they refused.

Anticipating a determined resistance, the young leader was greatly surprised when the demand was complied with.

On the very first summons the gates were thrown open, and Conrad, accompanied by Frideswide, rode into the court with a large force, and took possession of the palace.

It then appeared that only a very slender garrison was left there; Sir Eustace de Valletort, and all the other knights and squires with him, having received orders from the King to join him, without delay, at the Tower.

The satisfactory intelligence was instantly conveyed to Wat Tyler, who had halted, with his division of the army, in the park; and he at once repaired to the palace.

Deeming that a royal residence would tend to further his ambitious schemes, he took immediate measures to prevent the place from being plundered or destroyed; and feeling he could rely upon Conrad to carry out his injunctions, he committed the charge of the palace to him.

Everything now seemed propitious to the rebel leader. He had got rid of a rival, who might have offered dangerous opposition to his plans, and he had possession of a palace, wherein he might execute his designs.

Moreover, the sudden flight of Sir Eustace de Valletort and the knights proved conclusively that the royal party were full of alarm.

Before leaving the palace, and conducting his army to Blackheath, where the camp was to be formed, Wat Tyler sent for Sir John de Newtoun, and received him with all the haughtiness of a monarch in the great banqueting-hall.

Seated in a regal chair, with Conrad and Frideswide standing behind him, the rebel leader thus addressed the captive knight, who regarded him with looks full of wrath, being highly indignant at the surrender of the palace:

"I am about to send thee to the Tower as my messenger to the King. On thy honor and life, thou wilt return with his Majesty's answer, be it what it may?"

"I have already said it," replied the knight, sternly. "What wouldst thou have me state to the King?"

"First, thou wilt tell him that his royal manor at Eltham is in my hands. Add thereto, that if my demands be not conceded, I will next seize the Tower!"

"That menace will be derided," rejoined Sir John, scornfully. "With all thy host thou wilt never take the Tower!"

"Three days ago, thou wouldst have declared that Rochester Castle was impregnable—yet I took it!"

"The castle was betrayed!" cried Sir John. "But to thy message."

"Say to the King that he ought not to regard me as an enemy," rejoined Wat. "All I have done has been in his service."

"This is mere mockery!" cried the knight. "I will bear no such message."

"Ever since the young King's accession to the throne," continued Wat, "the realm has been infamously governed. Not by his Majesty, but by his uncles and the Council. They must be dismissed. The commonsalty have been grievously wronged by the nobles and the clergy. There shall be no nobles—no clergy. Moreover, the Archbishop of Canterbury must render a strict account of his ministry as Chancellor."

"To whom?" demanded Sir John.

"To me," replied Wat Tyler. "Tell the King I have much to lay before him, which I cannot confide to thee. I must confer with him alone."

"That can never be," rejoined Sir John.

"Deliver my message, nevertheless," said Wat Tyler. "Mark well my words: I alone can save the King from the peril in which he is placed. Without my help he may lose his crown."

So much significance was given by the rebel leader to the latter part of his speech, that Sir John could not help pondering upon it.

"The interview can take place here," pursued Wat Tyler, after a brief pause; "but it must be in private."

"And thank you his Majesty will trust himself with you?" exclaimed Sir John. "Your folly and audacity astound me!"

"He will be safer with me than with his uncles," rejoined the rebel leader. "But I will consent that the Princess, his mother, shall be present at the interview."

Whatever he thought of this proposition, Sir John made no remark, but contented himself with saying:

"I will deliver thy message to his Majesty."

"That is all I require from thee," rejoined Wat Tyler. "Thou wilt bring me an answer to Blackheath, where I shall be with my army."

Then, turning to Conrad, he added: "Let him be taken by a strong guard to Greenwich. There let a boat be procured to take him at once to the Tower."

Thereupon, Sir John Newtoun withdrew, accompanied by Conrad, who presently returned, having given the necessary directions respecting him.

Wat Tyler then quitted the palace, and took Frideswide with him, knowing he could trust her to convey secret messages to Conrad.

When the insurgents emerged from the park, Blackheath lay before them, and they had only to descend the woody slopes to reach the extensive plain.

Like Editha, Wat Tyler paused for a moment to gaze at the great city in the distance, but with far different emotions.

Unable to repress his exultation, he raised himself in his saddle, and, stretching out his hand towards the distant structures, exclaimed aloud, caring not that his words were overheard by Frideswide, who was close behind him:

"That city will soon be mine!"

He then rode down the hill-side, and was followed by the multitude.

Never before, never since, has Blackheath beheld a host like that gathered upon it then. Never was wilder excitement than the insurgents displayed when they first caught sight of London.

As each company reached the brow of the hill, the men gave a great shout, and then rushed headlong down, spreading tumultuously over the plain.

When all had descended a muster took place, and it was then found, as nearly as could be computed, that they numbered ninety thousand.

This, with the division stationed at Eltham, and the Essex army, commanded by the Outlaw, raised the insurgent forces to nearly a hundred thousand men.

Well might Wat Tyler deem such a force irresistible.

Immediately after the muster, and before the vast assemblage could disperse, John Ball caused his lofty pulpit to be raised in the midst of them, and commenced one of his fiery harangues.

He told his listeners, who were as attentive as ever, that their march was over—that they were at the gates of the doomed city, and had only to enter and destroy all nobles and wicked-doers within it, and seize upon the wealth which had been wrung from the people.

"Nineveh was a great city," he said—"an exceeding great and proud city, but it was not spared. Neither shall great and proud London be spared, by reason of its manifold iniquities!"

The fierce and terrific shout that arose at the close of his address, and seemed to shake the vault above, showed that all who heard him were ready to execute his orders.

CHAPTER VI.

SIR JOHN HOLLAND IS REPRIMANDED.

THE utmost consternation prevailed among the loyal and wealthy citizens of London when it became known that the royal palace of Eltham was occupied by the rebels—that ninety thousand Kentish peasants, under the command of Wat Tyler, were quartered on Blackheath—that another large army of Essex men, commanded by the redoubted Outlaw, was encamped on Hampstead Heath—in a word, that the City was completely invested, and that no reinforcements could be obtained from any quarter.

Nothing daunted by this alarming intelligence, and by the knowledge he had acquired that there were upwards of thirty thousand persons in the city favorable to the rebel cause, Sir William Walworth caused the gates of London Bridge to be closed and strongly guarded, shut all the city gates, and got together a great number of valiant and notable burgesses and men-at-arms, on whose loyalty he could depend.

Meanwhile, active preparations were made for the defense of the Tower by Sir Simon Burley and Sir Eustace de Valletort, to whom the command of the royal fortress was entrusted.

The garrison, having been somewhat reinforced, now consisted of six hundred men-at-arms and the like number of archers; but still the two experienced commanders, and almost all the nobles and knights with them, were full of anxiety, because they feared that some of the men were inclined to take part with the rebels.

The only person apparently free from uneasiness at this critical juncture was the young King. Whether his indifference was affected or not, it sorely displeased the two commanders, who rebuked him; but he answered their reprimands with great petulance.

"I shall not feign an alarm I do not feel," he said. "What can I do? You take measures for the defense of the Tower without consulting me; and you are right, since I am inexperienced."

"My liege," said Sir Eustace de Valletort, gravely, "your indifference has an ill effect on the soldiers."

"It ought to cheer them, because it proves that I do not despair of success," said the King. "It will be time enough to look despondent when we are beaten."

"I hope we shall not be beaten, my liege," said Sir Eustace. "Nevertheless, we must be prepared for the worst."

"I am prepared for whatever may happen," said Richard. "But 'tis useless to continue this discourse. Should you think fit to consult me on any matter, you will find me with the Princess."

Raising the tapestry that masked a side door, he proceeded towards his mother's apartments.

As he went out, his counselors regarded each other with an indefinite expression, wherein anger and grief were blended.

"Why should we strive to preserve his crown, which he values not?" cried Sir Simon, bitterly.

"Nay, we must not desert him now," rejoined Sir Eustace. "But I would that some of his ill-advisers were removed."

Just as the words were uttered, Sir John Holland entered the room.

"I thought the King was here," he exclaimed, looking round.

"His Majesty has just gone to the Princess's apartments," replied Sir Simon.

"I will follow him thither," cried the young noble.

"Stay, my lord," said Sir Eustace. "I would fain have a word with you."

Something in Sir Eustace's tone displeased the young noble excessively; but he stopped.

"My lord," said Sir Eustace, bluntly, "I pray you to excuse what I am about to say. I should be well pleased if you did not hold so much light and frivolous discourse with his Majesty. 'Tis out of place at this juncture."

"I am of the same opinion, my lord," added Sir Simon Burley, with equal bluntness. "Such levity is ill-timed. Avoid it, I pray you."

"Sdeath!" exclaimed Sir John, fiercely. "Am I to be tutored by you, my lords? Am I to ask you in what terms I must address the King, my brother? I trow not!"

"If you are really devoted to the King, my lord," said Sir Eustace, "and desire to maintain his authority, you will not divert his thoughts from the serious matters that demand his consideration by follies and frivolities. If you cannot, or will not do this, 'twere best you left the Tower."

"How?" exclaimed the young noble. "Leave the Tower?"

"Such is my order, as one of the Council!" said Sir Simon.

"And think you I will obey the order?" cried Sir John, furiously.

"You must," rejoined Sir Simon, sternly. "I am chief in authority here, and I deem your presence highly prejudicial to the King! Unless you exercise greater discretion, I will send you hence, and some others with you!"

"You dare not do it, Sir Simon," cried the haughty young noble, inflamed with rage.

"Retract those expressions, my lord, or I will order your instant arrest!" said Sir Simon.

Inturated as he was, Sir John felt he could not brave the Council's authority. He therefore forced himself to say he had been too hasty; but without waiting to see whether his apology was accepted, he raised the arras and passed out, as the King had done.

CHAPTER VII.

THE QUARREL BETWEEN THE KING AND SIR JOHN HOLLAND.

IN an ante-chamber which communicated with his mother's apartments, Richard found Editha.

She was alone, and stationed in the deep recess of a bay window, that looked upon the palace garden, and upon the broad river, flowing past the outer walls of the fortress. So preoccupied was she, that she did not notice the King's entrance.

In this pensive attitude she looked so charming, that Richard remained riveted to the spot, gazing at her in mute but passionate admiration.

Already the charms of the lovely damsel had made an impression upon his youthful heart, very different from any he had previously experienced. Although he had fancied himself in love with various Court damsels, who had spread their

area for him, he had never been touched so sensibly as by Editha's simple graces.

The novel sensation of being really in love surprised, and perhaps did not altogether please him; but the very efforts he made to overcome the growing affection increased it.

As yet, he had breathed no word of love to the fair damsel; but his ardent looks had revealed the state of his feelings as plainly as if he had given utterance to them.

And how was Editha affected by the discovery she had made, that the King was enamored of her? Alas! she discovered, at the same time, that she loved him.

To indulge such a feeling she knew would be fatal to her, and she strove to stifle it. In vain; it overmastered her.

She was thinking of the King as she looked out of the bay-window at the garden and the river; and when she turned and beheld him, she uttered a slight cry.

"Surely I do not alarm you!" he said, advancing towards her, and taking her hand.

"I was startled at the moment," she replied. "I knew not your Majesty was in the room."

"I had been here for a few moments," he said. "I was looking at you; thinking how beautiful—how very beautiful, you are!"

"Oh, my liege!" she exclaimed, blushing deeply.

"I adore you, Editha!" he cried, fervently. "You must be mine! I cannot live without you!"

"My liege, I implore you!" she entreated, attempting to withdraw her hand; but he retained it.

"Editha," he cried, "I never loved till I beheld you, and I can love no other as I love you! You are my life—my soul! I cannot exist without you!"

"I pray you let me go, my liege!" she cried, trembling.

"I must not listen to such words from you."

"Nay, by my faith, I will not release you, Editha, till you promise to requite my love."

"It would be sinful in me to make any such promise, my liege. I can never be your bride, and other than your bride I will never be. That no one has ever inspired me with such feelings as I entertain for your Majesty, I will own."

"Then you confess you love me?" cried Richard.

"I could not behold your Majesty unmoved," she rejoined.

"But our Blessed Mother will give me strength to conquer my feelings. I will die rather than swerve from my duty. Suffer me, I implore you, to retire!"

But the King would not relinquish her hand. Abashed by his ardent gaze, she cast down her eyes.

Just then, the door communicating with the corridor opened, and Sir John Holland came in.

He started on beholding the King and Editha standing together in the bay-window, and turned very pale.

"Pass on, my lord!" cried Richard, seeing he felt inclined to pause.

But, to the King's surprise and displeasure, Sir John came forward, and, controlling himself as well as he could, said:

"Your Majesty may not be aware that I have a prior claim to this damsel."

"A prior claim?" ejaculated Richard, looking at her.

"This false!" cried Editha, indignantly. "He is hateful to me! I pray your Majesty to deliver me from his further persecutions."

"Reassure yourself, fair damsel," said the King. "He shall trouble you no more."

But the young noble, who stood in very little awe of his royal brother, rejoined, in a half-defiant tone, "I do not intend to resign her even to your Majesty."

"Presume not too much on my good nature," said Richard.

And he signed to him to leave the room.

But Sir John Holland did not obey.

"This damsel is mine, I repeat," he said. "If I go, she shall come with me."

"Do not let him approach me, my liege!" implored Editha, clinging to the King for protection.

"Back, on thy life!" exclaimed Richard, drawing his sword, as his brother advanced.

"By St. Paul! I will have her, if I take her by force!" cried the young noble, unsheathing likewise.

Fearing some terrible catastrophe might occur if this unnatural quarrel were carried further, Editha threw herself between the brothers.

For a moment, they glared fiercely at each other, but no blow was struck, when Sir Simon Burley and Sir Eustace de Valletort suddenly entered.

Amazed at the sight they beheld, they both rushed forward, and, seizing Sir John Holland, instantly disarmed him.

"You are mad, my lord, that you dare to raise your hand against the King," cried Sir Eustace. "Know you not that you have placed your life in jeopardy by the rash act?"

Sir John made no reply.

Sir Simon flew to the door; and calling the guard, ordered them to arrest the young noble.

This was done.

"Take him to the Beauchamp Tower," added Sir Simon; "and let him be confined in a prison chamber."

"Must this be, my liege?" cried Sir John.

Fearing the King might relent, Sir Eustace interposed.

"My liege," he said, "the offense is too serious to be passed without punishment."

Thus admonished, Richard turned away, and his brother was removed.

As he was taken forth, Sir Eustace remarked to Editha, "I must look to you for an explanation of this scene."

"I am the unfortunate cause of it," she replied. "The quarrel was concerning me."

"I feared as much," said the knight, in an undertone.

"You have but escaped one danger to fall into another. You love the King?"

"Alas! yes!" she ejaculated. "Yet, fear me not."

"One person alone can protect you—the Princess," said Sir Eustace. "Go to her at once. Tell her all."

"I will," replied Editha, earnestly.

And she quitted the room, unperceived by the King, who was conversing with Sir Simon in the bay-window.

Scarcely was she gone, than the Lieutenant of the Tower entered from the corridor. His looks proclaimed that he brought important tidings.

"My liege," he said, with an obeisance to the King, "Sir John de Newtoun, sometime Constable of Rochester Castle, has just arrived at the Tower. He is the bearer of a message from the rebel leader, Wat Tyler, and craves an audience of your Majesty. Will it please you to receive him?"

"Ay, marry, good Master Lieutenant," replied the King.

"I am curious to hear this insolent knave's message. Sir John hath been a prisoner of the rebels ever since they left Rochester, as I understand. How hath he been treated by them?"

"He does not complain of ill-treatment, my liege," replied the Lieutenant. "But he says he hath been compelled to pledge his word to the rebel leader to bring back an answer from your Majesty."

"He shall have an answer; but it must be well considered," replied the King. "Call a Council forthwith in the great Chamber in the White Tower, and summon to it his Grace of Canterbury, the Lord Treasurer, and the other lords. When they are assembled, we will hear Sir John de Newtoun's message. 'Tis a grave matter, and must be solemnly discussed."

"I am glad to hear your Majesty says so," cried Sir Simon, approvingly. "Act up to the counsel of those devoted to you, and you will have nothing to fear."

The Lieutenant then departed to execute the King's behests.

"Tis meet the Princess should hear the message, my liege," said Sir Simon. "Her advice is ever judicious. Shall we solicit her Highness's attendance?"

"Nay; I will go to her myself," said Richard. "Come with me, I pray you."

Followed by the two commanders, he proceeded to his mother's apartment.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW SIR JOHN DE NEWTOUN DELIVERED WAT TYLER'S MESSAGE TO THE KING.

IN that unrivalled chamber in the uppermost story of the White Tower, wherein royal councils had been constantly held since the days of William Rufus, an audience was given by the King to Sir John de Newtoun.

Stretched from pillar to pillar on either side of the immense apartment, heavy curtains of arras materially diminished its width, but heightened its splendor.

Men-at-arms thronged the galleries; halberdiers were stationed at the principal entrance of the council-chamber; and ushers, pages, and various officers of the household were assembled within.

Beneath a canopy of state at the upper end of the room, and on raised chairs, sat the King and the Princess, his mother.

On his Majesty's right were placed the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord of St. John's, the Baron de Vertain, and the Baron de Gommegines.

On the left, and near the Princess, sat Sir Simon Burley, Sir Eustace de Namur, and Sir Henry de Sauselles.

The whole assemblage looked extraordinarily grave, and Richard had never before worn an aspect so serious.

None of his light companions, who made a jest of everything, were present—Sir John Holland, as we know, being confined in the Beauchamp Tower.

As soon as the King and the Council were seated, Sir John de Newtoun was ushered in ceremoniously by the Lieutenant.

After Sir John had made a profound obeisance to the King, who received him very graciously, he said, in accents that plainly bespoke his trouble:

"My gracious liege, I received the honor of knighthood from that flower of English chivalry, the very redoubtable prince, your father. Ever loyal and faithful to your illustrious grandsire, Edward III., I have ever been firmly devoted to yourself. What, then, must be my feelings, when I am forced to bear a message to your Majesty from villains who have taken up arms against you? I deserve to be thrust from your royal presence with scorn. And if you send me back unheard, to be put to an ignominious death by those rebels and traitors, I cannot complain. Return I must! My word, never yet broken, is pledged to the rebel leader, and my wife and children are detained by him as hostages."

"Rise, good Sir John," cried Richard, much touched by his affliction. "Deliver your message without fear. However deep may be our displeasure with these presumptuous rebels, we hold you excused."

"My liege," said Sir John, much relieved by the assurance, "I must again pray you to hold me excused, if I employ language that may sound disrespectful. But I have no option. Wat Tyler, the leader of the rebellious peasants, hath sent me as his ambassador to request that your Majesty will come to Eltham palace—now, alas! in the arch-rebel's hands—to confer with him on various matters."

"Go to him!" cried Richard, angrily; while indignant murmurs arose from the whole Council. "Doth the insolent knave expect compliance on our part?"

"He does, my liege," replied Sir John. "He hath the audacity to demand that the conference between your Majesty and himself shall take place in private. He will not allow any of your Council to be present."

Fresh murmurs arose from Sir Simon Burley and the others.

"The reason he assigns for this outrageous demand, my liege," continued Sir John, "is that he has certain propositions to make which can only be discussed by your Majesty and himself. Should your Majesty agree to the interview—as he doubts not you will—he will send a sufficient guard to conduct you from Greenwich to Eltham, and will guarantee your safety."

"And doth the madman imagine that we, the guardians of the King, would allow his Majesty to place himself in the hands of such a miscreant?" cried Sir Simon.

"I would not for a moment advise any such insane step as that proposed," observed Sir John; "but I am bound to say that I do not think Wat Tyler meditates treachery."

"I should not fear to hold a conference with him?" said Richard.

"Tis a snare to get you into his power, my liege!" cried the Princess. "Think not he would keep faith with you!"

All the Council were of the same opinion.

"If your Majesty really desires to have an interview with Wat Tyler," said Sir Eustace de Valletort, "it can be managed in this way, but in no other, without danger to yourself. Send a message by Sir John de Newtoun that you will meet him at your manor of Rotherhithe to-morrow morning. Descend the river in your barge, and on arriving at the appointed spot, keep close to the shore. On seeing your Majesty approach, the rebel leader, attended only by Sir John de Newtoun, can ride up to the bank, and the conference can take place. Sir John will keep strict watch upon Wat Tyler's movements, and, at a sign from him, the barge can be instantly rowed off."

"We like the plan," rejoined Richard. And no objection being raised to it by the Council, he added to Sir John de Newtoun, "Take back our answer to Wat Tyler. Tell him he must come forward unarmed, and attended only by you. He may do so without fear. We will descend the river in our barge to-morrow morn. If we find him not at Rotherhithe, we will forthwith return."

"I will deliver your message, my liege," said Sir John; "but I doubt if the presumptuous knave will be satisfied. He is so puffed up with success, that he fancies he can dictate terms to your Majesty. Should he not appear at Rotherhithe, the fault will not be mine."

"Understand this, Sir John," said Sir Simon Burley, "though it forms no part of your answer to Wat Tyler, the whole of the council will attend the King to Rotherhithe. They do not desire to take any part in the conference; but since they are responsible for his Majesty's safety, they cannot allow him to leave the Tower without them."

All the Council concurred in this opinion.

"I trust I may be allowed to accompany the King, and take one of my damsels with me?" said the Princess.

"Undoubtedly, your Grace," replied Sir Simon.

"Who is to be left in command of the Tower during your absence?" demanded Richard.

"The Lieutenant. We can perfectly confide in him," rejoined Sir Simon.

The King signified his approval; and, all being settled, Sir John de Newtoun took leave.

He was conducted by the Lieutenant to the private stairs at St. Thomas's Tower, where his boat awaited him.

Crossing the river, he made the best of his way to Blackheath; and being provided with a pass, he had no difficulty in penetrating through the rebel host to the tent of the leader.

CHAPTER IX.

SIR LIONEL DE COURCY AND HIS DAUGHTER ARE BROUGHT PRISONERS TO ELTHAM.

ON flying from Canterbury, Sir Lionel de Courcy had proceeded with his daughter, and all his servants and retainers, to a large mansion which he possessed in the neighborhood of Maidstone.

Two days after his arrival, he was attacked by a large party of insurgent peasantry, and after an obstinate defense, his retainers were put to the sword, and the old knight and his lovely daughter were carried off as prisoners, and delivered to Wat Tyler at Blackheath, to be dealt with as the rebel leader might deem fit.

Aware of the outrage inflicted upon Conrad Basset by Sir Lionel, and being willing to afford the young rebel commander an opportunity of avenging the wrong done him, Wat Tyler refused all offers of ransom, and sent the captive knight and his daughter to Eltham, under the charge of Frideswide and a guard.

As neither Sir Lionel nor Catherine had been told that Conrad was commander of the rebel garrison quartered at the palace, they were greatly astonished when brought into his presence, and the old knight was struck with dismay.

Guarded by Frideswide, who marched beside them with a two-handed sword on her shoulder, they were led to the great banqueting-hall, where Conrad was seated in a royal chair.

On beholding him, Catherine cast down her gaze; but Conrad hardly looked at her. With a feeling of gratified vengeance, he enjoyed the confusion into which the old knight was thrown.

As to Frideswide, who stood beside the prisoners, she already hated Catherine for her beauty, and, with jealous quickness, watched her every look.

After regarding the old knight steadily for a few moments, Conrad exclaimed in a voice of bitter mockery: "You are welcome to Eltham, Sir Lionel. The tables are turned since we last met. Then you were in power; now I am master!"

Sir Lionel made no reply to this speech; and Conrad called for a scourge, which was brought him.

"At length I have an opportunity of requiting thee for the injury thou hast done me!" he said.

And he raised the scourge to strike the old knight, who regarded him sternly, when Catherine flung herself upon her knees before the vindictive young man, and besought him to spare her father.

"Do not humiliate him thus, I implore you, Conrad!" she exclaimed.

"Why should I forbear to strike him?" cried Conrad, fiercely. "He had no consideration for me!"

"Desist, girl!" exclaimed the old knight, haughtily. "You appeal to one who has no sense of honor. I am unarmed, and a prisoner. The shame will be to himself, should he strike me."

"I was held by thy servants, when struck by thee, or thou hadst not been living now," rejoined Conrad.

"Had I the sword that bold woman bears upon her shoulder, thou wouldst not dare come near me!" cried Sir Lionel. "Nor would I long remain thy prisoner!"

"Give him thy sword," said Conrad to the Amazon.

"Not I, by the rood!" rejoined Frideswide. "I will sooner put him and his daughter to death!"

And roughly seizing Catherine, who was still on her knees before Conrad, she forced her to rise.

"Help, Conrad!" shrieked Catherine. "Thou wilt not let me be murdered by this terrible woman!"

"Release her!" cried Conrad.

And at the word, Frideswide instantly relinquished her hold of the fair damsel, but looked like a young lioness robbed of her prey.

"Oh! she has hurt me!" exclaimed Catherine, clasping her bruised wrist.

"Thou art fit only for a lady's bower," remarked Frideswide, contemptuously.

"No more of this," said Conrad, authoritatively, to the Amazon.

Then, turning to the captive damsel, he added:

"For your sake, Catherine, I am content to spare your father."

There was a slight tenderness in his tone, that did not escape Frideswide, and increased her secret anger.

"I knew you would relent, Conrad!" cried Catherine, with a grateful look. "Be wholly generous, and set us free."

"I will ask nothing from him!" said her father, proudly.

"And I will grant nothing more," rejoined Conrad.

"You have granted too much already," muttered Frideswide, who looked sullen and displeased. "Shall I bestow them in a prison-chamber?"

"Oh! no—no!" exclaimed Catherine.

Conrad could not resist her imploring look.

"Pledge me your knightly word, Sir Lionel," he said, "that you will not attempt to escape, and neither you nor your daughter shall be placed in confinement."

"What I would not do for myself, I will do for my child," said the old knight.

And he gave the required pledge.

"Conduct them to the state apartments, and let some one attend," said Conrad.

But finding Frideswide unwilling to obey the order, he signed to the captives to follow him, and led them to an adjoining apartment, where he left them, without further speech.

As he came forth, he found Frideswide standing near the door, and bade her, somewhat angrily, begone.

She did not obey; but, looking fixedly at him, said:

"Thou still lov'st this damsel. I am sure of it, and I know what will ensue. Thou wilt yield to her entreaties, and desert the great cause. Sooner than that shall be," she added, with a look that left no doubt she would execute the threat, "I will kill her with my own hand."

"Thou art mistaken," said Conrad, vainly essaying to pacify her. "The damsel is nothing to me now."

"Tis false!" exclaimed Frideswide. "Think not to deceive me. I have told thee what I will do. Beware!"

And she marched off, leaving him greatly irritated and perplexed.

"Catherine must not be exposed to the rage of this jealous fury," he thought. "She shall be removed to some strong room, where she can be carefully guarded. There is a tower in the west angle of the great court, in the lower chamber of which she might be placed. There she would be safe. It shall be so."

Having come to this determination, he gave orders that a repast should be forthwith served to the prisoners, and proceeded to the tower in question.

As will have been surmised, it was the structure beneath which was the entrance to the subterranean passage; but of this circumstance Conrad was ignorant.

On examining the lower chamber of the tower he thought it well adapted to the purpose required, and gave directions that it should be immediately prepared for Catherine's reception.

CHAPTER X.

HOW CONRAD WAS PREVAILED UPON TO ABANDON THE REBEL CAUSE.

DESIROUS of offering some explanation to the fair damsel

before her removal, Conrad next repaired to the apartment in which she and her father were confined.

They had just finished the repast provided for them, and rose from the table as he entered the room, to thank him for the attention shown them.

Evidently, Sir Lionel's feelings had undergone a great change. He no longer regarded the young man haughtily, but, advancing towards him, said, in a frank, but apologetic tone:

"Conrad Bassett, I have wronged you, and I hasten to tell you so. Since I have been brought here I have seen enough of you to satisfy me that your nature is noble. Pardon me, if you can."

Surprise kept Conrad silent; and he might have doubted that he had heard aright, if Catherine's looks had not shown him that the change in her father's sentiments had not been wrought by her.

"Sir Lionel," he rejoined, "you have effaced the wrong done me. I will think of it no more. Had you said thus much a month ago, I should never have taken up arms against the King, in aid of such an ignorant rabble."

"Why continue in rebellion against him?" said the old knight. "I owe you a reparation, and will make it. Return to your allegiance, and you shall have my daughter's hand."

"Alas, Sir Lionel," rejoined the young man, in a troubled tone; "the offer comes too late. I have gone too far to retreat."

Catherine caught her father's arm, and whispered in his ear.

"Have no fear," said the old knight, addressing Conrad. "I will procure you a pardon from the King."

"Were I to consent, I should become a double traitor," cried the young man. "Yet, if I stay, I feel I shall yield."

"Then you shall not go!" cried Catherine.

"Nay, do not detain me!" he exclaimed, unable to tear himself away, and gazing at her passionately.

"Stay! stay! or you will lose me forever!" she cried, in accents that proved resistless.

"You have conquered, Catherine," he said. "For your sake, I will become faithless and forsworn to my confederates."

"Since you have thus decided, let us fly at once," she cried.

"Impossible!" he rejoined. "You must leave the palace secretly."

"Secretly? Are you not the commander?"

"You are given in charge to me by Wat Tyler," rejoined Conrad. "I cannot openly disobey his orders. Besides," he added, with a meaning look at Catherine, "you have an enemy, who will watch jealously over you, and would assuredly prevent your departure."

"You mean that terrible woman who brought us here, and threatened me?" cried Catherine, trembling. "She frightens me. Do not let her come near me again."

"I will place you where you will be perfectly secure," said Conrad. "I came to tell you so. You must endure a few hours' solitary confinement in a strong-room."

"I will endure anything rather than be exposed to her malice," cried Catherine. "But will not my father be with me?"

"No, he must remain here," replied Conrad. "He is in no danger. To-night I will liberate you both, and accompany you in your flight. Are you prepared to proceed to the Tower at once? I will conduct you thither. No guard will be necessary to your removal."

Catherine expressed her readiness to accompany him.

"Do not fear this separation from your daughter, Sir Lionel," said Conrad. "No harm shall befall her."

"I commit her to your care," replied the old knight, confidently.

Tenderly embracing his daughter, he consigned her to Conrad, by whom she was forthwith conducted to the Tower.

As they crossed the court they observed Frideswide among the spectators, but though she cast a fierce and vindictive glance at Catherine, she offered no interruption.

"There is that dreadful woman!" exclaimed Catherine, shuddering. "I wish I had not seen her."

Conrad endeavored to reassure her, and would have thrown back an angry look at Frideswide—but she was already gone.

Somewhat discomposed by this incident, he hurried on to the Tower, and having placed the fair captive in the lower chamber, which, as we have stated, had been hastily prepared for her reception, he left her, and stationed a guard at the door, giving strict injunctions that no one should be admitted.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT BEFELL CATHERINE DE COURCY IN THE TOWER.

CATHERINE had been for several hours in her prison chamber, and began to find the long confinement excessively wearisome. However, she consoled herself by the thought that her lover would soon be with her.

Evening had come, and at night he had promised to liberate her and her father, and fly with them from the palace, and she doubted not he would keep his word.

Occupied by such thoughts, she was striving to banish the apprehensions that naturally beset her, when she heard the key turned in the lock, and started up joyfully, feeling certain it was Conrad.

What was her terror as the door opened, and Frideswide entered the chamber! She would have shrieked, but fright rendered her speechless.

Having closed the door, the dreaded Amazon strode towards her, while the poor girl shrank back as far as possible.

Frideswide's aspect, however, was not so fierce and menacing as it had been. On the contrary, she tried to assume a good-natured look, but the expression was ill suited to her countenance.

"Be not afraid, fair damsel," she said, in tones as soft as she could employ. "I am come by Conrad's order to take you hence."

"I will not accompany you," rejoined Catherine. "Nor do I believe he has sent you."

"You will change your opinion of me when I show you how easily you can escape," rejoined Frideswide. "I tell you I am sent by Conrad to set you free, and conduct you from the palace."

As she spoke she stooped down, and opened the large trap-door.

Catherine watched her in astonishment.

"There! Will you believe me now?" said the Amazon, pointing to the steps. "Beneath is a long underground passage, which has an outlet beyond the walls of the palace. I will guide you thither."

"But we have no light," said Catherine, looking down uneasily.

"A light is not needed," rejoined Frideswide. "You will soon be out of the passage, and at liberty."

"I will go with Conrad, but not with you," said Catherine.

"Why has he not come himself?"

"Wat Tyler is expected at the palace," rejoined Frideswide.

"Conrad has sent me to get you out of the way before his arrival. You need not fear for your father. He can pay a ransom."

These assurances produced a certain impression upon Catherine; but she could not overcome her dread of the Amazon, and again recoiled from her.

Losing all patience, Frideswide seized her, and thrust her down the steps.

The Amazon instantly followed, and shutting the trap-door, stifled the cries of her victim.

An hour later, Conrad entered the chamber. He had been alarmed by finding the door unguarded. But the worst apprehensions assailed him when he could nowhere perceive Catherine, but discovered Frideswide in her place.

The Amazon was standing in the center of the chamber, with her foot on the trap-door, and looked perfectly calm.

"She thou seekest is not here," said the imperturbable Frideswide.

"What has thou done with her?" demanded Conrad.

"No matter! Thou wilt never behold her again."

"Thou hast robbed me of one I loved better than life, remorseless woman!" cried Conrad, in a voice of anguish.

"The temptress is removed," rejoined Frideswide, sternly.

"Thou wilt now continue faithful to the cause."

"Thou art a destroyer, and deservest death!" cried Conrad, regarding her with abhorrence.

Conrad looked at the Amazon with a fixed but bewildered stare. Her cool manner and unflinching glance greatly puzzled him; but she did not for an instant shrink from the scrutiny.

"I have delivered thee from the sorcery by which thou wert bound," said Frideswide. "By this time, Wat Tyler must have returned to the palace. I can justify myself before him for what I have done. Come with me!"

And, seizing his hand, she dragged him from the chamber.

CHAPTER XII.

THE INTERVIEW AT ROTHERHITHE.

SUNNY was the day, and bright the river, as the royal barge conveyed the young monarch from the Tower to Rotherhithe, to hold a conference with the rebel leader.

Gorgeous was the burnished vessel; yet those on board it did not seem bound on a voyage of pleasure. The oarsmen were arrayed in the splendid royal liveries, but they were all armed. Archers and men-at-arms took the places of pages and serving men. Gentlemen and esquires were armed.

Armed, likewise, were all the members of the Council, except the Archbishop of Canterbury. Richard himself was clad in chain mail, with a hood and tippet of silk, worked with the royal badge and devices, as was his richly-embroidered surcoat. The sides of the gilded vessel were hung with shields, each bearing a noble cognizance, and from the stern floated proudly the royal standard of the haughty Plantagenets.

In the forepart of the barge, surrounded by his attendants, all glittering in polished steel, stood the young King, making a very gallant show.

The Princess of Wales accompanied her son, and had hitherto been seated in the splendid saloon forming the interior of the vessel; but as they were now approaching Rotherhithe, she came forward with Editha, who was her sole attendant, and who looked around in search of her father.

Ceasing to row, the oarsmen allowed the barge to glide gently down the river towards the point of the low bank on which two horsemen were stationed.

With one of these personages the King and his attendants were well acquainted; but only the Princess and Editha knew the other. However, no one required to be told that this stalwart man-at-arms, mounted on a strong war horse, with a sword by his side, a dagger at his girdle, and a mace attached to his saddlebow, was Wat Tyler.

The visor of the rebel leader was raised, so that his broad, masculine countenance could be fully distinguished. Though struck by his powerful frame and determined look, the observers were repelled by the extreme insolence of his demeanor, which was never for an instant abated during the interview that ensued.

About twenty yards behind the rebel leader, on the grassy bank, were stationed two other persons on horseback, who likewise attracted the attention of the royal party. These were Conrad Bassett and Frideswide. The latter was armed with a two-handed sword, and carried a large triangular shield.

Further off, where the ground began to rise, and was partially covered by timber, a large body of armed insurgents could be descried. This tumultuous host could not be kept in order by its captains; but when the royal barge approached they set up a tremendous shout that startled all who heard it, and made those who were with the King apprehensive of treachery.

However, the shouting soon ceased, and Richard, who felt no alarm, caused himself to be taken near the shore to converse with the rebel leader.

"Thou art Wat Tyler, I doubt not," he said. "I have come to confer with thee according to my promise. Speak! I am willing to listen to thy petition."

"I have no petition to make," rejoined the rebel leader, haughtily. "I have certain propositions to offer for your Majesty's consideration and acceptance. But our conference must take place in private, at Eltham, as I stated by the mouth of my ambassador, Sir John de Newtoun, who is here present."

"And dost thou think his Majesty will trust himself with thee?" demanded Sir Simon Burley.

"Wherefore not?" rejoined Wat Tyler. "I am captain of the vast host quartered at Blackheath, and I promise him my safeguard. If I purposed to ensnare him I could do so now. Should his Majesty disembark here I will personally conduct him to Eltham."

"What answer shall I return?" said the King to those near him.

"Reject the offer," rejoined Sir Simon.

"If thou dost mean me well," said Richard to the rebel leader, "why cannot the conference take place here?"

"If it takes place at all, it must be at Eltham, as I have said," replied Wat Tyler, in a decided tone. "And mark me, my liege, if we come not to terms to-day I will enter London with my whole army to-morrow. I swear it by St. Dunstan!"

"You hear what he says, my lords," observed Richard; "and he can make good his words. He has an army strong enough to enter London. Moreover, as you well know, the citizens are disaffected."

While they were conversing anxiously together, Wat Tyler, who had noticed the Princess and Editha among the nobles, again called out:

"My liege, I trust that the Princess, your mother, will assist at the conference, and I will pray her Grace to bring my daughter with her."

"Will you go with me, madam?" asked Richard.

"Readily," she rejoined. "And I will take Editha with me, as he requests."

"This must not be, my liege," said Sir Eustace de Valletort. "There is some treachery in the villain's proposal. You must not trust yourself with him, nor must the Princess."

"Let me go and speak with him, gracious madam," cried Editha. "Perchance I may produce some effect upon him."

"How say you, Sir Eustace?" said the Princess. "Shall we send her?"

"No, madam," replied the knight. "No one must go ashore." And he added, significantly: "This conference will soon be ended. Be not afraid. Wat Tyler will never enter London."

The words reached Editha's ear, and she trembled exceedingly.

"No faith need be kept with the audacious villain," said the Archbishop of Canterbury. "He hath sworn, if the King shall not accede to his demands that he will destroy London. 'Tis meet that he be slain."

"Since all the insurgents look to him, the rebellion may be ended by his death," said the Lord Treasurer.

"We should be worse than traitors if we suffered him to escape," said Sir Simon Burley. "Ho, there, archers! make you rebel your mark!"

And at the order, the archers sprang up and made ready their bows.

All had been over with Wat Tyler at that moment, and perchance the rebellion had been ended at the same time, if Editha had not uttered a slight cry, which she was utterly unable to repress.

This cry did not alarm the rebel leader, or cause him to change his position, but it caught the quick ear of Frideswide, who had listened to all that was said, and narrowly watched the proceedings on board the barge.

She had noticed Sir Simon Burley's gesture, and the slight stir that followed when the archers appeared, and instantly divining their purpose, and dashing forward with lightning swiftness, she came up just in time to spread her broad shield before Wat Tyler, and guard him from the volley of arrows aimed at him.

The rebel chief was unhurt, but a fatal shaft pierced the Amazon's breast, and she would have fallen backwards from her horse, if Conrad, who came up next moment, had not caught her.

Her dying looks were fixed upon him she loved; and, while gasping for breath, she said:

"Catherine still lives! I deceived you—seek her in the subterranean passage, 'neath the tower! The key of the iron gates hangs at my girdle. Take it. Forgive me, Conrad—for you I did this wicked act!"

And she expired.

Not without difficulty did Conrad sustain his inanimate burden, till he was relieved from it by a small party of insurgents, sent to him by Wat Tyler.

Maddened by fears for Catherine, he then struck spurs into his steed, and dashed off to Eltham.

Meanwhile Wat Tyler had galloped off, till he got to a certain distance, when he turned round, and, shaking his hand menacingly, called out, in a stentorian voice:

"Our next meeting—and it will not be long hence—shall take place in the Tower of London!"

Profiting by the means of escape unexpectedly afforded him, Sir John de Newtoun quickly dismounted, and sought refuge in the royal barge.

Seeing that the rebel leader had escaped, Sir Simon Burley ordered the oarsmen to row back to the Tower as swiftly as they could, and the injunction was obeyed.

But all those on board the barge heard the terrific and vengeful yell with which Wat Tyler was greeted when he returned to his followers, and told them of the attack made upon him. They would fain have hurried down to the river in the hope of wreaking their vengeance on the instigators of the treacherous act, but Wat checked him.

"Doubt not we will have ample vengeance ere long," he said. "The Lord Archbishop and the Lord Treasurer were on board the barge, and if they counseled not the act, they might have prevented it. We will have both their heads!"

"We will!" roared all the hearers.

"We have nothing further to do here," pursued Wat Tyler. "We must return to Blackheath, and as soon as the army can be got together we will march on London."

"To Blackheath!—and then to London!" vociferated the insurgents, brandishing their pikes and glsarmes.

On their arrival at Blackheath they found the whole host in a state of the most furious excitement, a report having already arrived of the treacherous attempt on their leader.

Wat Tyler took advantage of the excitement to get the army together, and this being speedily accomplished, the march commenced.

Before setting out, Wat Tyler sent Hothbrand with a message to his brother chief, who, it will be remembered, was encamped with the Essex division of the insurgent army on Hampstead Heath, acquainting the outlaw with his own design, and bidding him make a simultaneous attack on the north side of the city on the following day.

Hothbrand set off on the errand at once, and galloping down to Greenwich, succeeded in procuring a bark to convey him and his steed to the opposite side of the river.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW CATHERINE WAS FOUND IN THE SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGE.

So furiously rode Conrad that he arrived at Eltham long before the news of Wat Tyler's intended march on London.

Struck by his distracted manner, the guard at the barbacan feared some disaster must have occurred, but did not dare question him.

Riding at once into the great quadrangular court, he flung himself from his panning steed and hurried to the tower.

Several armed men were standing near the door, and he ordered one of them to bring a lighted torch without delay, and while the man went on the errand, he entered the chamber in which Catherine had been confined.

Without much difficulty he discovered the trap-door, and had just succeeded in opening it when the torch was brought him.

Snatching it from the wonder-stricken man, and bidding him remain on guard within the chamber and suffer none to enter, Conrad plunged down the steps and gained the vault; but he knew he should not find her there, and went on, his anxiety increasing each moment.

At length he reached the first iron gate, and unlocking it with the key taken from Frideswide, he passed to the second gate, which was quickly thrown open.

Again he hurried on, looking anxiously on either side of the passage; but nothing save bare walls met his view. Fancying, at length, that he perceived a retreating figure in the distance, he called out.

But the person continued to flee from him. Quickening his pace, he soon became satisfied it was Catherine. Yes! 'twas she! she lived! he was in time to save her!

Bewildered by terror, she ran on, screaming fearfully.

Conrad's agony at this moment cannot be painted. He feared her senses were gone, and she fled so swiftly that he could not overtake her.

At last, when he had almost begun to despair, her strength seemed suddenly to fail her, and she fell to the ground.

In another instant, he came up and raised her in his arms. As the dishevelled tresses seemed to blind her, he removed them from her face, but she regarded him with a wild and vacant stare, in which terror predominated.

"Do you not know me, Catherine?" he cried. "'Tis I—'tis Conrad!"

"No; you are not Conrad!" she exclaimed. "You are sent by that cruel woman to kill me. She had no pity in her breast; but if you have any, leave me! Let me die in peace!"

"No; you shall not die, Catherine!" he exclaimed. "I am come to deliver you!"

But the words, though passionately uttered, did not reassure her, and she still shrank from him.

In this dire extremity, Conrad besought St Catharine, St. Lucy, and all blessed saints to aid the distracted damsel. The appeal seemed to be answered. From this moment Catharine's senses began to return, and after gazing fixedly at him, she breathed his name.

"Conrad!"

Filled with delight, he strained her to his breast.

"You are just in time, Conrad!" she murmured faintly. "Had you delayed much longer, you would have found me lifeless!"

Shuddering at the thought, he pressed her still closer to his heart.

"Tis not an hour since I discovered you were buried here, Catherine," he said, "and I flew to your rescue as fast as my steed would carry me. Had I been too late, I would not have survived you. But the good saints who watch over you, had pity on us both! Have no more fear! She who sought your destruction is gone, and when dying, repented her cruelty."

"Then I forgive her!" cried Catherine; "and may Heaven forgive her likewise! But let us not stay longer in this dreadful place. Bear me hence, Conrad. I am weak, depressed in spirits, and have no power to walk any distance."

Extinguishing the torch, he took her in his arms, and rapidly retraced the course he had pursued.

Passing through the iron gates, which he had left open, he quickly gained the stone steps, and mounting them, issued forth from the trap-door.

Greatly astonished was the man left on guard when Conrad reappeared with his lovely burden; but he was not allowed to ask any questions, for Catherine had swooned, and Conrad instantly sent him in quest of some of the female servants who had been left in the palace.

By the time the man returned with two of the Princesses' handmaidens, Catherine had regained her sensibility, and did not require the restoratives brought by the damsels.

Shortly afterwards she was taken to the Princess's own apartments; and her new attendants, who seemed greatly interested in her, promised to pay her every attention.

Feeling now quite easy on Catherine's account, Conrad locked the gates in the subterranean passage, and kept the key in his own possession.

Having caused the trap-door to be fastened down, he placed a guard at the door of the chamber, and then went in search of Sir Lionel de Courcy.

During all this time the old knight had not attempted to quit the state apartments, and knew nothing of what had occurred, except that he had been informed that Conrad was gone to Blackheath to attend upon the rebel chief, Wat Tyler.

He was, therefore, surprised to see the young man, and still more surprised to hear what had brought him back.

Needless to say that he listened to the recital of his daughter's imprisonment by Frideswide with the most painful interest; but since Catherine was now free, he could only rejoice and thank her deliverer. He did so in the warmest terms, and embraced Conrad as a son.

This explanation over, they deliberated long and anxiously as to the best course to be pursued in the present emergency.

Flight would now be easy; and as soon as Catherine had recovered from the shock she had sustained she could be removed. But where could a place of refuge be found for her? The whole of Kent was in a state of insurrection. No man, no castle, no household with any pretensions to respectability was secure from the rebels.

To Canterbury it was impossible to return. After much anxious consideration, they resolved to take her to the Dartford Priory. Sir Lionel was acquainted with the Lady Isabel, and felt certain she would afford her an asylum. Thither, then, he proposed to send his daughter as soon as she could make the journey with safety.

Sir Lionel strongly counseled Conrad not to abandon his post under the present trying circumstances.

"You have now," he said, "the command of a garrison of five hundred men, who are likely to continue faithful to you. On no account quit them. Should any reverse happen to Wat Tyler, you can at once declare in favor of the king. By doing so at the right moment you may materially aid the royal cause. Be guided by me. As soon as I have taken my daughter to the Priory of St. Mary I will return, and remain with you till something is decided. I do not for a moment despair of the royal cause. Though it may be beset by difficulties for a time, its ultimate triumph is certain. Nothing can be more fortunate than that you are in possession of Eltham. By prudent management you may help to crush the rebellion, and your reward will be proportionate to the service rendered."

"My reward will be sufficient if I obtain your daughter's hand," Sir Lionel, replied Conrad.

END OF THE THIRD BOOK.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

THE SAVOY.

CHAPTER I.

JACK STRAW'S CASTLE.

LIKE a vulture looking down from a high on a plain, covered with herds and flocks, the rapacious Outlaw gazed on London from the summit of Hampstead Hill.

While trying to count the palaces, mansions, halls, monasteries, churches, and hospitals, spread out before him, he thought only of the plunder they would yield.

The fierce Goth, at the head of his barbarian host, did not gaze on Rome from the neighboring hills with greedier eyes than did the insatiate marauder on the great city he had sworn to pillage.

"Its wealthiest merchants shall deliver up to me all their riches, if they would save their lives. On no other condition will I spare them. This I swear!"

And while pronouncing the vow, he kissed the relic that he constantly wore upon his breast.

At the time when the Essex insurgents were gathered on Hampstead Heath, there was a small tower on the highest point of the hill.

Within this tower, once used as a beacon, the Outlaw had fixed his headquarters. And though not a vestige of the original structure is left, the site is known, and the much frequented hostel now occupying the spot has acquired the designation of "Jack Straw's Castle."

From the top of the tower floated the banner of St. George, and near it stood the Outlaw.

He had been there nearly three hours, and during the greater part of the time had been gazing at the doomed city—though he sometimes cast an anxious look in the direction of Blackheath; the position of which was indicated by the hills adjoining that extensive plateau.

At the door of the tower stood the strong black steed, that had borne him safely through so many difficulties and dangers, fully equipped, and with the battle-axe attached to the saddle-bow.

Around the tower, on the brow of the hill, on the gentle slopes, and in the numerous hollows, was gathered the immense host that acknowledged him as leader,

and was ready to execute his commands, be they what they might.

The presence of these wild, uncouth men, in their rough garb, and with their strange weapons, was little in harmony with the soft and tranquil character of the place.

Still the scene was very striking, and would have pleased a painter. Many of the insurgents were lying upon the fragrant sod, basking in the sunshine, for the day was hot. Others, seated around the brink of the hollows, watched their comrades, who were leaping, or wrestling, or amusing themselves with other pastimes.

But by far the greater number were standing on the numerous knolls, and looking towards the city, excited by desires of pillage and destruction, akin to those inflaming the breast of their chief.

The Outlaw was still on the top of the tower—still occupied by the same greedy thoughts—when his attention was caught by a horseman riding quickly up the south side of the hill.

At once he recognized Hothbrand.

Evidently he was the bearer of a message from Wat Tyler, and the Outlaw awaited his arrival with impatience, but did not quit his own position.

Several inquisitive insurgents crowded around Hothbrand, as he galloped on, but he refused to satisfy their curiosity, and halted not till he reached the foot of the tower.

Saluting the chief, he then proceeded to deliver his message.

"Wat Tyler greets thee well!" he said. "He is marching on London, and desires thee likewise to advance."

"Thou bringst me good news, Hothbrand, and I thank thee for it!" replied the Outlaw, joyfully. "Yet doth it surprise me, for I heard my brother was about to meet the King at Rotherhithe. The conference, I conclude, has come to naught?"

"To worse than naught," replied Hothbrand. "It had well-nigh resulted in the death of thy brother chief. A snare was laid for him by the Council, and he narrowly escaped from it with life."

"Now, by St. Nicholas, their treachery shall be speedily punished!" roared the Outlaw. "Comrades, ye hear what our valiant lieutenant, Hothbrand, saith!" he cried, in a voice of thunder, to the throng gathering thickly around. "The Council have dealt treacherously with my brother, Wat Tyler, and have sought to slay him. Shall we not slay them?"

"Ay, marry," responded the insurgents, brandishing their pikes and bills.

"Hark ye, comrades," cried Hothbrand, anxious to inflame them still further. "Wat Tyler believes the instigators of the perfidious design were the Archbishop of Canterbury and Sir Robert Hales, the Lord High Treasurer. Both were in the barge with the King."

"Both shall be put to death!" shouted the infuriated peasants.

"You will not have your wish just yet, for they are safe within the tower," said Hothbrand.

Cries of angry disappointment arose from the throng. "Wherever they may be, they shall not escape us," said the Outlaw. "As to the Lord High Treasurer, we can take ample vengeance on him. We will burn the Temple, which he governs, and destroy all the Chancery records. Moreover, we will burn the rich Priory of St. John of Jerusalem, near Clerkenwell, of which he is Grand Master; but we will first strip it of its treasures. The revenues of that hospital are immense. Would we could collect them all; but we will get what we can."

This proposition, being in exact accordance with the wishes of the peasants, was received by them with acclamations.

"Forget not that Sir Robert Hales hath a manor at Highbury," said Hothbrand. "You can discern the mansion from this spot. Yonder it stands amid the trees, about half a mile from Clerkenwell."

"I see it plainly enough," rejoined the Outlaw. "By my troth, it is a stately mansion; but it shall soon be levelled with the ground. We will sack and burn it as we march to Clerkenwell."

Placing his bugle to his lips, he then sounded a loud and prolonged blast, that echoed far and wide, and roused the entire host.

As soon as he perceived that the men were in motion, he took down the banner, and, waving it aloft, pointed with his sword towards the city, shouting, "To London!"

"To London!" repeated a thousand eager voices.

Descending from the tower, he gave the banner to the man accustomed to bear it, and mounting his steed, put himself at the head of the host, calling out, "St. George for Merry England!"

This evoked fresh cries.

He then rode down the hill, attended by Hothbrand, and followed by the whole body of the insurgents.

At that time, the country between Hampstead and London was, for the most part, open, and the rebels marched on with very little interruption to the large park surrounding Sir Robert Hales's noble mansion at Highbury.

Made aware of their approach by the hideous tintamar the inmates of the mansion fled, and hurried off to St. John's Priory, carrying the news with them.

After being ransacked, the magnificent mansion was set on fire.

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE HOSPITAL OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM WAS PILLAGED AND BURNT.

ONE of the richest and most beautiful religious houses then existing near London was the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, at Clerkenwell.

The priory was founded about two centuries previously by Jourdain de Brisset, a wealthy Norman baron, and the Lady Muriel, his wife, and belonged to the Knights Hospitaliers.

Not far from the Priory stood a large Benedictine Nunnery, likewise founded by the before-mentioned pious and charitable personages.

With the Nunnery, the Outlaw determined not to meddle, and he gave strict orders to his followers that the holy sisterhood should in no way be molested, or their habitation injured.

No murmurs were raised at the injunction, for the insurgents were quite content that the Priory of St. John's should be given up to them. Permission to pillage and destroy this vast and magnificent edifice was sufficient to satisfy their rapacity, as well as their desire for vengeance.

How tranquil looked the gray and reverend pile as the marauding host approached it on that lovely summer e'en, bent on its plunder and destruction.

Not far from it stood the Nunnery, looking equally calm and beautiful.

Both were large and picturesque structures, and both charmingly situated near a wide green, that took its name from a well of marvelous virtue arising within it.

Yet those inside the Priory were far from tranquil. They knew that the Grand Master's mansion at Highbury was burnt, and felt sure from the threats uttered by the rebels that their own turn would come next.

Preparations for defense were hastily made, but it was clear that the place could not hold out long.

Geoffrey de Burgh, Prior of St. John's, had been a valiant warrior in his time, and all the brotherhood were Knights Templars; but they had long ceased to bear arms, and devoted themselves solely to religious exercises. All, however, were ready to take up the sword again, and die in defence of the Hospital.

But the Prior hoped it would not come to such a pass, and persuaded himself he might be able to prevail on the leader of these lawless men to retire. Alas! he knew not with whom he had to deal.

When the Outlaw and Hothbrand, followed by a large band of insurgents, rode up to the magnificent gateway, they found it shut, and were about to break down the gate, when a noise was heard above, and the Prior and the holy brotherhood appeared on the battlements.

Geoffrey de Burgh was well stricken in years, but he bore himself proudly, and had a bold and lofty look, and even though arrayed in his full ecclesiastical habits, he looked more like a warrior than a monk. His hood was thrown back so as fully to display his striking countenance.

It may be proper to mention that the Prior was secretly armed, and that the whole of the knightly brotherhood wore armor under their gowns and had swords by their sides. To all appearance, however, they were in religious attire.

"What would ye?" demanded the Prior. "Tis almost needless to inquire your purpose; yet I would learn it from your own lips."

"Our purpose, most holy father," rejoined the Outlaw, in a jeering tone, "is to take possession of this Hospital, to drive you and your brethren from it, to seize upon all your plate, jewels, and treasures, and then to burn down the edifice."

"Your wickedness and audacity excel all belief," exclaimed the Prior.

"To this act of retributive justice," pursued the Outlaw, "we are moved by the treasonable attempt just made by your Grand Master upon the life of our leader. We will have vengeance."

"Have ye no dread of the Church's most terrible anathemas?" demanded the Prior. "Withdraw at once, ye sacrilegious wretches, or I will launch them upon you!"

"Pour out the whole vials of your wrath upon our head, an' it please you, most holy father!" rejoined the Outlaw, in a tone of contemptuous indifference. "We are likely to be turned from our purpose by denunciations. But we have talked long enough. Cause the gates, I pray you, to be forthwith unfastened, or we will burst them open and enter!"

"Thou wilt never enter, sacrilegious villain!" cried one of the brethren, stepping forward with an arbalest, which he had held concealed behind him.

And he launched a bolt, but, though it struck the Outlaw on the breast, it did him no injury.

"Well shot!" he cried. "But thou didst not know that I wear a sacred relic on my breast—to say nothing of my jerkin of cuirbouilly!"

He then added quickly to those behind him, "Shoot, archers! shoot!"

In immediate answer to the injunction, a volley of arrows winged their flight to the battlements; but none were hit, the Prior and the brethren having sought shelter.

The Outlaw then ordered his men to burst open the gates, and the direction was speedily carried out.

No sooner was the entrance free, than the most eager among the rebels rushed tumultuously in, without waiting for their leaders; but they were astounded to find a small party of knights drawn up in the centre of the courtyard, sword in hand, and fully prepared to receive them.

The Prior and the holy brotherhood had resumed their former accoutrements.

Had the old warriors been provided with steeds, they could easily have ridden down their assailants, and out their way through the host outside. But flight being impossible, they resolved to sell their lives dearly.

Shouting his battle-cry as of old, Sir Geoffrey de Burgh, by the sweep of his sword, soon cleared the crowd near him, and performed prodigies of valor, lopping off heads, feet, arms, and legs as he went on.

The knights who followed supported him with such energy that they forced the rebels to retire, and would, probably, have driven them out altogether had it not been for the Outlaw, who, seeing how matters stood, dashed forward on his charger, and smote the old knight with his battle-axe.

Close followed by Hothbrand, he struck down three or four other knights; and the rebels, animated by the example of their leader, and reinforced, turned, and after a short but terrific conflict, the whole of the Knights Hospitaliers were slain.

As the Outlaw, who was entirely uninjured in the deadly strife, gazed around the court of the once peaceful priory, now deluged with gore, and strewn with the bodies of peasants and noble knights mingled together, he exclaimed, in exultation, "Amplly is my brother avenged!"

Through this scene of slaughter, the insurgents, who were thronging through the gate as if for a *fete*, had to pass, but they heeded not the frightful spectacle.

Receiving permission from their leaders to plunder the Hospital, they spread themselves in all directions; rushing into the great hall, into the church, the chapel, the Prior's apartments, the refectories, the dormitories, everywhere; seizing everything they could lay hands upon with an assiduity perfectly surprising.

They seized all the plate, jewels, and ornaments that they could find in the church and the chapel; the great gilt candlesticks, the gilt crosses, the gilt pix, the chalices, censers, cruets, and crysmatories.

Entering the vestry, they purloined all the vestments they could discover in the ambreys and chests: copes of red silk, full of imagery; suits of white damask and baudkin; copes with birds of gold; copes with gold lions and silver unicorns; chasubles of blue; red palls for sepulture; albs with apparel; vestments of white damask with crosses; altar fronts of blue velvet, embroidered with archangels; great latten candlesticks, and silver lamps.

Such was some of the treasure appropriated by the rebels.

How much else the sacrilegious villains carried off before the magnificent pile was set on fire cannot be stated. It is sad to reflect upon the destruction they accomplished.

While this plunder was going on, such of the household as were able to escape, took refuge in the Nunnery, where shelter was given them by the abbess.

When every article of value had been carried off, the Hospital was fired in several places; but at first the flames

made slow progress, as if unwilling to destroy so fair and useful an edifice.

At night, the burning pile, which had illumined the sky for miles around, formed a grand and mournful spectacle.

The lurid light of the conflagration fell upon thousands of wild figures gathered upon the green, and gave them a weird and fantastic appearance.

The Outlaw and Hothbrand were stationed on horseback before the entrance of the convent, so as to prevent any harm from being done to that building.

Distracted with terror, with the red light reflected upon the walls, and gleaming through the windows of the convent, with the hideous and appalling outcries of the miscreants ringing in their ears, the poor sisters passed a dreadful night.

The burning Hospital formed a conspicuous object from the walls on the north side of the city, and struck terror into all beholders, most of whom believed that the Nunnery was likewise on fire.

For seven days the fire continued, and even then the vast building was not entirely consumed. The great gateway was uninjured, and still exists.

After watching by the conflagration during the greater part of the night, the Outlaw snatched a few hours' repose on the green, after which he set off with his followers to meet his brother chief at London Bridge.

CHAPTER III.

HOW LAMBETH PALACE WAS BURNED.

SIMULTANEOUSLY with the terrible events previously narrated, Wat Tyler's host had marched on to Southwark, causing havoc and desolation on the way thither.

All the prisons were broken open—the Marshalsea, the habitation of the Master of the Marshalsea, the King's Bench, the Clink, and the Compter; and the prisoners being let loose, gave their best aid to their deliverers in the work of destruction.

Their ranks being thus reinforced by the worst malefactors, the rebels committed even greater outrages than before.

On hearing of Wat Tyler's approach, the Lord Mayor caused the gates of London Bridge to be closed and strongly guarded; and being thus prevented from crossing the river, the insurgents contented themselves with doing all the mischief they could at Southwark.

Their chief object being to pillage the archiepiscopal palace at Lambeth, they marched thither, and on the way destroyed all the small habitations on the Bankside, the occupants—most of whom were Flemings—being obnoxious to them.

An ineffectual attempt was made by the guard to defend the palace, but they were quickly overpowered and slain, and the rebels bursting into the archiepiscopal apartments and the chapel, quickly stripped them, tearing the arras from the walls and the curtains from the windows, and pulling down the throne.

All the time they were thus employed, they gave utterance to terrible denunciations against the Archbishop. Having completed their work of plunder, they set fire to the palace, and raised a most terrific shout when the flames began to rise.

So loud was the shout, that it was heard at the Tower by the Archbishop himself, and caused his heart to sink within him. He knew it announced the slaughter of his faithful servants, and the spoliation and the destruction of his house.

Not only were the ears of the good Archbishop pierced by that terrific shout, but his eyes were blasted by the sight of the flames arising from his palace.

Having mounted to the summit of the White Tower with the King, and the rest of the Council, to watch the proceedings of the rebels, he had tracked their desolating course along the Bankside, until they reached Lambeth; where, after he had been kept in a terrible state of suspense for awhile, his worst fears were realized.

All forbore to address him, feeling they could offer no consolation.

The Archbishop was still stunned by this heavy blow, when word was brought the Lord High Treasurer, who was standing near him, that his mansion at Highbury was burnt, the Hospital of St. John's plundered and in flames, and the Prior and all the holy brotherhood slain.

Woeful tidings these for the Grand Master. But he did not submit patiently to the decrees of heaven, like the Archbishop.

Stamping his foot with rage, and uttering a dire malediction against the rebels, he vowed revenge.

The King and the Council gazed anxiously at each other, with looks that seemed to ask, "What further ill-tidings are in store? and what will the morrow bring forth?"

As yet, London Bridge was secure.

But how long could it be maintained against the tremendous host which they beheld swarming upon the banks of the river, from the Church of St. Mary Overy to Lambeth?

The city was likewise safe. No gate had yet been forced.

But who could answer that every entrance would not be thrown open by the disaffected burghesses? Never before was London in such a strait! Never before were King, nobles, and knights in such jeopardy!

A strange picture was presented to those who gazed from the summit of the White Tower, on that beautiful summer evening. Fire and sword had done their dreadful work on the banks of the Thames, and the smooth surface of the river was dyed with a ruddier glow than that of the setting sun.

London Bridge, with its tall houses, towers, and gates, occupied by armed men, stood out like a huge, black mass against the rosy western sky.

But the flames of Lambeth Palace, and of the still burning habitations on the Bankside, were reflected on the massive tower and lofty spire of St. Paul's, on Westminster Hall and Abbey, and on the Savoy, the magnificent palace of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster.

The embattled front of the last-named edifice, with its turrets and magnificent bay windows looking upon the river, was so brightly lighted up that it seemed on fire, as if anticipating its approaching doom.

In the north, the sky was reddened with the reflection of the burning Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem.

The contemplation of this striking picture, fraught, as it was, with beauty and terror, depressed the young King so much, that afraid of betraying weakness, he hastily descended from the summit of the donjon; and without waiting for the Council, proceeded to his mother's apartment in the Palace.

CHAPTER IV.

EDITHA'S MISSION TO WAT TYLER.

The Princess was conversing anxiously with Chaucer,

who, it may be remembered, was a prisoner at the Tower at the time, when the king abruptly entered.

Rushing towards her with a distracted look, and regardless of those present, he exclaimed:

"All is lost!"

"What mean you, my son?" she cried, starting up.

"Know you not that Wat Tyler is at the gates?" he rejoined. "To-morrow he will enter London as a conqueror, and snatch the crown from my brow!"

"Heaven forbid!" she ejaculated. "Much may be lost, but your crown, I trust, is safe."

"You would not think so, madame," he cried, "if you had beheld the sight I have witnessed—a countless host of rebels gathered on the banks of the Thames. Wat Tyler's name resounded on all sides. He is omnipotent. Advance he will; I have not the power to drive him back!"

Then, becoming aware of Chaucer's presence, he added, quickly:

"You have great influence with this powerful rebel, good Master Chaucer. Exert it now, and make me forever beholden to you."

"Alas! my gracious liege, you mistake," rejoined the poet. "I have no influence with him; but there is one person here present to whom he cannot refuse to listen—his daughter."

Thus alluded to, Editha came forward, and addressing the King, said:

"If your Majesty only expresses the wish, I will go to him at once."

"The damsel cannot go alone, my liege," said Chaucer. "I am ready to attend her on the mission, which, perilous as it may seem, may, perchance, prove successful."

"I pray you let me go, sire," said Editha. "Something tells me I shall prevail with him."

"Be it as you will," replied Richard. "Should any harm come to you, I shall never forgive myself for permitting you to go on so dangerous an errand."

Then, taking her aside, he said in a low, significant tone:

"If you see Wat Tyler, tell him there is nothing I will not grant."

She made no reply, but looked at him fixedly.

After a moment's pause, Richard went on:

"Were he to ask me to make you my queen I would assent."

A flush came over her fair face; but it instantly fled, and she replied in a low, firm tone:

"No, my liege, I will not delude him!"

Ere Richard could make any rejoinder, she turned to the Princess, and said:

"Have I your Highness' permission to set out on this errand?"

"I am loth to give it," replied the Princess. "Yet I cannot refuse. Promise to return to me if you can."

"Your Grace need not doubt me," she rejoined, earnestly. "No time should be lost. Are you ready to set forth, good Master Chaucer?"

"On the instant," he replied.

"I trust to see you back at the Tower," said Richard. "But understand, you are no longer a prisoner."

While Editha withdrew to make some slight change in her attire, and put on a hood, Richard sent for the Lieutenant and bade him instantly prepare a boat to convey Chaucer and a companion across the river on a secret mission.

Without asking questions, the Lieutenant proceeded to execute the command.

Five minutes afterwards the gate beneath St. Thomas' Tower was thrown open, and a boat propelled by four vigorous oarsmen, and containing two persons, shot with lightning swiftness across the river.

As it was now almost dark, the boat was not perceived, and Chaucer and Editha were safely landed at the wharf in front of St. Olave's Church, about a bow-shot below London Bridge.

Their task accomplished, the oarsmen speeded back again.

In another instant a dozen rebels, armed with pikes, rushed up to those who had just stepped ashore, and bade them give an account of themselves.

"Who and what are you? and whence came you?" cried several threatening voices.

"We are friends, and come from the Tower," replied Chaucer.

"Friends! and from the Tower! That may scarce be," cried the foremost of the party.

"Tis true, nevertheless," rejoined Chaucer. "Take us to your leader."

"Not till we have further questioned you," cried the man.

But Editha, who had recognized his voice, removed her hood and said:

"Do you not know me, good Master Liripipe?"

"By St. Bridget! it is Wat Tyler's daughter Editha!" cried the person addressed.

"Art certain?" observed Josbert Grouthead, who was near him.

"As certain as I am that this is Master Geoffrey Chaucer," replied Liripipe.

"Nay; an it be so we must take them forthwith to Wat Tyler," cried another.

"I pray you do, good Master Curthose. You will be thanked for your pains," said Editha.

"She knows me!" exclaimed Curthose. "It must be Editha. We will conduct the damsel to her father at once; he will be glad to see her."

"Where is your leader?" inquired Chaucer.

"His headquarters are at Tabard, in the High Street, close at hand," replied Curthose, whose manner was now completely changed. "Doubtless he is there now, since he hath only just returned from Lambeth."

"Then pray conduct us to him without delay, for our business is most important," said the poet.

Placing them in their midst, in order to protect them from the tumultuous crowd, the party proceeded towards the High Street. As they came forth from the back of St. Olave's church, they cast a glance towards London Bridge, the gates of which were covered with archers and cross-bowmen. High Street was full of armed rebels, and it was with difficulty they could force their way along the crowded thoroughfare. Without the escort, they could never have got on. Many sights attracted attention; but they were chiefly struck by the ruins of the two great prisons—the Marshalsea and the King's Bench.

At length, after frequent stoppages, the party reached the "Tabard."

The large courtyard of the hostel was full of armed men, carousing, and making a great clamor; but it appeared that Wat Tyler was in the principal guest-chamber with John Ball, discussing his plans over a flask of wine.

On seeing Editha and Chaucer, who were brought in by Liripipe and the others, Wat Tyler started to his feet; but, instead of welcoming the young damsel with the affection of a father, he uttered an angry exclamation, that seemed to bode ill for the success of her mission.

Scarcely deigning to notice Chaucer, he snatched up a

light, and ordered Editha to follow him into an inner room.

Closing the door, he demanded, in a stern tone, why she had left the Tower.

"You have interfered with my plans by coming hither!" he said.

"I am sent by the King," she rejoined.

"Seeks he to make peace with me?" he demanded.

"He does," she replied. "Will aught induce you to spare London, and retire?"

"No!" he replied. "Were the Council to sue me in a body, I would not retire. I am master now! London is at my feet! I shall spare none of his nobles and rich men. But I shall not harm the King. I have other designs in regard to him. Thou shalt share his throne!"

"And can you seriously indulge such a thought?" she said.

"Seriously—ay! Wherefore not? He will be glad to espouse thee to save his crown."

"But you do not deem it necessary to ask whether I will consent to such a scheme."

"Tut! Thou art not likely to object!"

"You judge me by yourself; but you are mistaken! I am not a fitting consort for the King!"

"Fitting or not, he shall wed thee!"

"Dismiss these thoughts from your mind, I implore you," she said. "I am not to be dazzled by the splendor of the offer made me, and reject it!"

"Reject it! ha! Do I hear aright?" cried Wat Tyler, astounded. "You will wed whom I please!"

"I have already expressed my fixed determination, and shall abide by it," she rejoined, calmly, but firmly. "Time will show," said Wat. "You must return at once to the Tower."

"Will you not listen to what I have to say?" she cried.

"To what end?" he rejoined, sternly. "I will grant nothing! Say to the King that he may expect me, ere long, at the Tower. And I will then propose my terms to him."

She made another effort to move him, but he continued inflexible, and took her back to the large room, where he had left Chaucer and the others.

All looked surprised; but the rebel leader's aspect was so stern that none dared to question him. Not even John Ball made a remark.

"Take back this damsel to St. Olave's Wharf," he said to the men; "and find a boat to convey her to the Tower."

"That will be difficult, if not impossible," said Liripipe.

"No—a boat will be sent for her," said Wat.

"I will go with her," cried Chaucer.

"You can accompany her to the wharf," rejoined Wat Tyler; "but you must return to me. You cannot re-enter the Tower."

Deeming it useless to remonstrate, Chaucer did not make the attempt.

Nothing more was said. The party went back as they came.

Wat Tyler was right. No sooner did Editha appear on the wharf, than the boat that had brought her over shot swiftly across the river, and took her back to St. Thomas' Tower.

Chaucer did not embark, and returned, in a very melancholy frame of mind, to the "Tabard."

CHAPTER V.

THE MEETING OF THE REBEL LEADERS AT LONDON BRIDGE.

EVER since the outbreak of the insurrection, the weather had been uniformly fine; and a morn more beautiful was never beheld than that which heralded the following day.

Bright sunshine lighted up the quaint habitations, monasteries, convents, churches, and hospitals of old London. Bright sunshine lighted up the old walls and gates of the City, thronged with armed men. It lighted up the battlements and gates of the Tower, likewise thronged with archers and cross-bowmen; St. Paul's, with its tower and spire; and, above, the ancient Abbey.

On the opposite side on the river all was ruin and desolation. Monasteries, mansions, prisons, churches, burnt or demolished; Lambeth Palace still smoking.

The whole of Southwark was filled with an armed host; and such was the terror of the inhabitants that they were compelled to join the rebels.

But we must now see what had taken place on the other side of London.

At daybreak the Outlaw, flushed with success, appeared with his host before Bishopsgate, and sent Hothbrand forward to sound a trumpet and demand admittance.

This was refused by the guard, and bolts and arrows were discharged at the rebels.

Thereupon the Outlaw commanded an immediate attack, but while this was going on, a party of disaffected citizens came up, and forcing away the guard, threw open the gate, and the insurgents marched into the City.

The men were disposed to indulge in triumph, but their leader ordered them to march on quickly to London Bridge, in order to effect a junction with Wat Tyler, and they proceeded thither accordingly, without meeting with any opposition.

Already the north gates of the bridge were thrown open, and the insurgents were welcomed enthusiastically by a large party of citizens favorable to the cause.

On they marched through the narrow street formed by the tall habitations lining either side of the bridge, brandishing their weapons, and making a most terrific din.

The gates on the Surrey side of the bridge had been thrown open, and here, in the open space at the end of the High Street, a meeting took place between the rebel leaders.

Wat Tyler, attended by John Ball, congratulated the Outlaw on his success, and thanked him heartily for what he had done; but his haughty manner did not altogether please his brother chief.

Leaving the men to keep possession of the bridge, the three leaders proceeded to the "Tabard," where they breakfasted.

As soon as their hasty meal was concluded, Wat Tyler said to his brother chiefs, "Before we attack the Tower we will prove to all that we belong not to John Gaunt by burning down his Palace of the Savoy. How say you, brothers?"

"I approve the step," replied the monk. "It will convince the people that we mean not to be governed by the King's uncles."

"Ay, marry will it!" said the Outlaw. "What a plunder we shall have!" he added, with a ferocious laugh. "Tis said the Duke's palace contains more plate and treasure than any other mansion in England."

"The palace must not be plundered," observed Wat Tyler, sternly and authoritatively.

"Not plundered?" exclaimed the Outlaw, in astonishment.

"A proclamation shall be made that no man, on penalty of death, shall presume to convert to his own use anything within the Savoy Palace. All plate, vessels of gold and silver, and all costly ornaments, of which there are plenty, shall be broken in pieces."

"This will cause great dissatisfaction among the men," observed the Outlaw.

"It will prove to the citizens that we desire not private gain, but right and justice," said John Ball. "We are not robbers, but liberators."

"The proclamation, I repeat, will give rise to much murmuring," said the Outlaw. "I like it not."

"I have a task will suit thee well," observed Wat Tyler to the Outlaw. "While I am engaged in the destruction of the Savoy, thou shalt demolish Newgate, and liberate the prisoners."

"I should prefer the former task," grumbled the Outlaw. "But no matter."

"Thou shalt go with me, good Master Chaucer," observed Wat Tyler to the poet, who was present at the discussion, "and see justice done upon the Duke."

"If I thought my voice would be listened to, I would implore you not to destroy the noble Palace of the Savoy," said the poet.

"Thy supplications are vain," rejoined Wat Tyler, sternly. "The Duke of Lancaster is a traitor to the people. We will punish him."

"Once again I say to you, the people have no better friend than John of Gaunt," cried Chaucer.

"Go to!" said Wat Tyler. "I have heard enough in his praise. We will now set out. Five thousand men will suffice to accomplish the demolition of the Savoy. The rest shall remain to pull down Newgate, and keep the King and the Council safely cowed up in the Tower."

"Be it so," replied the Outlaw. "When I have done with Newgate, I will look after the Lombard Street merchants. I have an account to settle with Messrs. Benedetto."

"Do what you will," replied Wat Tyler. "But meddle not with the Tower till I return from the Savoy."

They went forth, and mounted their horses, which were kept ready for them in the courtyard of the "Tabard."

They next proceeded along the High Street towards London Bridge—word being given to the enormous host that they were about to enter the City. Chaucer was provided with a horse, and rode beside Hothbrand.

For nearly two hours a dense mass was constantly pouring over London Bridge.

On the entrance of the rebel army into the City—partly from good-will, partly from fear—the citizens gave them an enthusiastic welcome, and opened their houses and cellars to them.

In a word they hailed them as deliverers—whether sincerely or not may be questioned.

The three leaders proceeded together along Cornhill and Cheapside, to Newgate, where the Outlaw and Hothbrand, with a vast number of rebels, stopped to demolish the gate and prison: while Wat Tyler and John Ball descended Ludgate Hill with five thousand men, and marched along Fleet Street to the Strand.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW WAT TYLER SAT IN JOHN OF GAUNT'S CHAIR.

PRESENTLY they came in sight of the Savoy, the magnificent mansion belonging to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, "to the which," saith old Holinshed, "in beauty and stateliness of building, with all manner of princely furniture, there was not any other in the realm comparable."

Viewed either from the Strand or from the river, the ducal Palace of the Savoy presented a magnificent appearance, and its internal arrangements corresponded with its splendid exterior.

Built about the year 1245—nearly a century and a half before the date of our story, by Peter, Earl of Savoy and Richmond—the noble palace in question was transferred to the friars of Mountjoy, from whom it was purchased by Eleanor, Queen of Henry III., for her son Henry, Duke of Lancaster. By him it was greatly enlarged and beautified at an enormous expense. The palace was assigned as a residence to King John of France, while that unfortunate monarch was a captive in England, in 1357, and again six years later. It subsequently came into the possession of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, by whom it was still further enlarged and greatly embellished.

Such was this splendid palace when the rebels approached, bent on its utter demolition. Not only was it magnificent, but full of rich furniture, arras, pictures, plate, jewels, and wine. In a word, it was the residence of the proudest and most powerful peer in England, who claimed, in right of his wife, daughter of Don Pedro, to be king of Castile.

The Duke of Lancaster had a princely establishment, more numerous, more splendid than that of the King. He had a high chamberlain, a vice-chamberlain, gentlemen ushers, gentlemen waiters, lords, knights and esquires, gentlemen cupbearers, carvers, sewers, fifty yeomen ushers, groomers of the chamber, pages, doctors, a chaplain, an almoner, minstrels, yeomen porters, tall yeomen for the house, a steward, and a treasurer, making in all some three or four hundred persons.

Such was the terror inspired by the rebels, that when the officers of this splendid establishment heard that Wat Tyler had crossed London Bridge and was marching through the City with the declared intention of demolishing the palace, they abandoned all thought of defending it, and fled in a body, leaving only half a dozen persons behind. These were the steward, the comptroller, and four tall and stout yeomen. Of necessity, they could offer no real resistance; but they closed the great outer gates, and made fast all the doors.

On arriving at the palace with his men, Wat Tyler gazed at it with admiration, and was so impressed by its grandeur that for a moment he thought he should like to keep it for himself. But he gave up the notion almost as soon as formed, and caused his proclamation to be read that no one, on pain of death, should secrete or carry off any part of the plate or ornaments.

"Doubt not," he cried, in a loud voice, "that the penalty will be inflicted!"

As the rebels had heard of the flight of the household, they burst open the gates and doors, very deliberately, and then rushed into the palace.

Their entrance, however, was opposed by the steward and those with him; but only for a moment. These brave and faithful individuals were instantly despatched.

Among the first to enter the palace was Wat Tyler, as he desired to behold it in all its splendor before it became a wreck.

But while he looked at the great oak staircase, with its sculptures and armorial bearings, its beauties were hidden by a crowd of savage-looking peasants mounting to the grand gallery above, which they speedily filled, tearing down the tapestry and destroying all the pictures and ornaments.

Scarcely had he entered the great banqueting-hall and noted its magnificent furniture, than it was invaded by another party, who were about to commence the work of destruction; but Wat Tyler authoritatively commanded them to desist, and taking his seat in John of Gaunt's chair, and placing John Ball on his left, and Chaucer, whom he had compelled to follow him, on a seat below, ordered that all the valuables should be collected and placed on the table before him, that he might see them destroyed.

This was done with the utmost expedition. All the chests and cupboards were emptied, and the great table, at which the Duke's retainers were wont to dine, was almost entirely covered with immense vessels of gold and silver, such as were displayed on solemn occasions, most of them beautifully graven, great silver bowls, flagons, goblets, and wine-pots of quaint device.

To these were added all the ornaments that could be collected, chains, girdles, brooches, buckles, ornamented with diamonds and other precious stones, embroidered mantles and apparel, and garments of gold and silver, making a most magnificent display.

Chaucer groaned internally as he beheld this mighty heap of treasure and rich apparel, so soon to be sacrificed.

Wat Tyler then ordered a repast to be served, of which he and John Ball partook. The rebel leaders invited Chaucer to sit down with them; but though the poet complied, he ate nothing.

Taking a large goblet from the heap, Wat caused it to be filled with choice Gascoigne wine from the Duke's cellars, and after he had drunk a deep draught, he threw the cup down on the floor, and quickly crushed it to pieces with his foot.

Perceiving that the men standing around were gazing at the glittering pile before them with greedy eyes, and fearing they might be tempted to disobey his orders, Wat caused hammers to be brought, wherewith all the gold and silver plate and vessels were beaten out of shape and broken in pieces.

The ornaments were next destroyed, the jewels and other precious stones being ground down in mortars and the dust scattered about, while the embroidered apparel and garments of cloth of gold and silver were hacked to pieces.

Wat Tyler went forth upon the terrace, to see the fragments of the gold and silver vessels cast into the Thames, taking Chaucer with him.

When the last basket had been emptied into the river, he remarked, with a stern smile, to the poet:

"Tell the Duke what thou hast seen, and he will understand how I would have served him, had he been here! Thou art now free, and mayest depart, unless thou dost prefer to stay, and see the palace burnt down!"

"I have seen too much already!" replied Chaucer, sorrowfully. "I will take a farewell look at the edifice I have so much loved, and then depart."

After gazing for a moment at the splendid pile, which now seemed more beautiful than ever, he went his way.

As soon as he was free from the rebels, the poet made haste to quit London, and returned not till these terrible times were past.

"Now set fire to the palace!" cried Wat; "and let the work be done effectually!"

While the order was eagerly obeyed, and fire applied to the combustibles already heaped in different parts of the building, Wat Tyler quitted the river terrace.

As he strode through the palace, and once more noted its grandeur, he may perchance have felt some compunction. But it swayed him not.

Having seen the combustibles lighted, he went forth and stationed himself in the front court, to watch the conflagration.

The fire burnt with extraordinary rapidity, and flames soon broke out from some of the great bay windows.

Orders had been given that every one should come forth; but they were very slowly obeyed, and a trumpet was now sounded to recall them. Presently, half a dozen men rushed out, having a prisoner with them. They brought him before their leader, who saw at once that it was Liripipe.

"What hath he done?" demanded Wat.

"He hath disobeyed thine order, and concealed a large piece of gold plate beneath his jerkin!" replied one of the captors. "Behold it!"

"He must die!" replied Wat, sternly.

"Spare me!" cried the wretch. "Thou hast known me many years in Dratford! I have restored the plate!"

"Thou hadst hidden it!" cried the man who had accused him. "We discovered it upon thee!"

"Place the gold plate in his jerkin," said Wat; "and then cast him into the fire!"

The terrible sentence was carried out literally.

Notwithstanding his cries and struggles, the miserable wretch was hurled through an open bay window, and perished in the flames.

But Liripipe was not the only Dartford rebel destroyed by the burning of the Savoy.

Mark Cleaver, Curthose, Grouthead, Peter Crust, and others, numbering nearly forty persons, found their way to the Duke's well-stored cellars, and resolving to enjoy themselves, broached a cask of Malmsey, and another of Gascoigne wine.

Though told that the palace was on fire, they heeded not the warning, but continued their carouse; until a great wall fell down, with a tremendous crash, and shut them up completely.

Escape was then impossible, and their comrades did not even attempt to liberate them, but left them to their fate. It may be that the wine they had access to prolonged their wretched existence. For seven days their cries were heard. Then all became silent.

Lambeth Palace, when fired by the rebels, formed a grand object; but it was nothing compared with the burning Palace of the Savoy.

Thrice the size of Lambeth, loftier, grander, in every respect, and better situated, the Duke of Lancaster's palace, when set on fire by the rebels, could be seen by the whole of London.

The enormous structure burned throughout the night, and as the flames sometimes rose to a great height, the spectacle, though terrible, was wonderfully fine.

Nothing could have affected the citizens more powerfully than this fire, inasmuch as it proved to them beyond all question that the rebels were not connected, as they had hitherto imagined them to be, with the ambitious John of Gaunt.

Moreover, the burning palace could be seen by the King and his Council in the Tower, and the spectacle affected them, though in a different manner.

Coupled with other events that occurred simultaneously, it made them think that the nobles and gentlemen of England were doomed.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW MESSER BENEDETTO WAS BEHEADED AT THE STAND-ARD AT CHEAPSIDE.

WHILE the noble Palace of the Savoy was destroyed by

one set of the rebels, outrages even more dreadful were committed by the Outlaw and his party.

Newgate had been demolished, and the prisoners liberated; and thus another large band of malefactors was added to the rebel army. Many houses were plundered as the army marched past the Old Change, near St. Paul's, and along Cheapside towards Lombard Street, whither they were bound, and none escaped unless they could prove themselves friends of the insurgents.

Everything was done by the terrified citizens to conciliate the rebels, who were now completely masters of the City. Provision-shops, wine-cellars, and shambles were thrown open. But though the Outlaw did not interdict pillage, he forbade all feasting and carousing till the day's work was done.

As the rebels marched along they stopped every man they met, and thus addressed him: "With whom holdest thou?" If he answered not "With the King and the Commons," they put him to death. Thus carrying terror and destruction with them, they marched to Lombard Street.

It may seem strange that with a Lord Mayor so courageous as Sir William Walworth, and a citizen so valiant as Sir John Philpot, the rebels should be allowed to commit all these dreadful outrages without hindrance; but the loyal citizens were completely panic-stricken, and thought only of defending their own habitations.

With this design, the wealthier among them got together their friends and as many servants as they could, and strongly barricaded their houses. All the larger habitations were thus converted into fortresses.

Owing to all the armed men being thus employed, the Lord Mayor and Sir John Philpot found it impossible to get together a sufficient force to attack the rebels with any chance of success. They could not muster three hundred men; and what were these against the enormous host, now increased by all the disaffected citizens, who alone amounted to some twenty thousand?

At that time there were in the City two renowned knights, Sir Robert Knolles and Sir Perducas d'Albreth. Each of them had six score companions, completely armed, and ready to sally forth upon the rebels at any moment; but they desired to reserve their men for the King, feeling sure he would soon need them.

When Wat Tyler and the rebel leaders crossed London Bridge and entered the City, a consultation took place between the Lord Mayor and these two sagacious and experienced knights, who strongly advised him not to attack the rebels, or the City would be utterly destroyed, but to wait for a favorable opportunity, which could not fail to occur.

Lombard Street, as we have already had occasion to mention, was then almost entirely inhabited by a company of rich Italian merchants, who lent money on usance, and of late had farmed some of the Government taxes, amongst others the obnoxious poll-tax, which had exasperated the people, and caused the insurrection.

Certain he should obtain a very large amount of treasure by plundering the houses of these rich Italian merchants, and actuated by a special desire of revenge upon Benedetto, the Outlaw made all haste to Lombard Street.

On hearing of the approach of the rebels, the merchants hastily concealed their chests of treasure and plate in the cellars and other secret places, and carrying with them as much gold as they could, abandoned their houses and took refuge in the adjoining churches of St. Mary Woolnoth, St. Edmund, and Allhallows, where they hoped they would be safe. Vain expectation!

As the Outlaw turned from Cheapside into Lombard Street, he called out to his followers that he was about to deliver to them the treasures of the Lombard merchants, who had robbed the peasants.

"Go and take out all you can find!" he cried. "But from each house I claim ten thousand marks. The rest is yours, and must be equally divided among you all. We will force the knaves to disclose where their treasure-chests are hidden."

On breaking into the houses, the rebels were surprised to find them deserted, and feared, at first, that the treasure was gone; but they soon discovered where the chests and money-bags were concealed, and lost no time in emptying them; taking care to lay aside the sum required by their leader.

When the houses had been stripped of all the valuables, the Outlaw, with Hothbrand and a large party, went in search of the fugitives, having been informed that they had taken refuge in the adjoining churches.

The unfortunate Benedetto, and two other Italian merchants, were found in the church of St. Mary Woolnoth.

They were at the altar, and the priests, who were standing before them, menaced the intruders with the thunders of the Church if they dared to touch them.

But the Outlaw, and those with him, were not to be deterred by such threats; and, rushing forward, dragged the victims from the place of sanctuary.

Reading his doom in the Outlaw's terrible looks, the unhappy Benedetto fell at his feet and besought pity, proffering, at the same time, the bags of gold he had brought away with him.

The Outlaw took the money, but did not relent.

Regarding the kneeling merchant with a stern look, he said:

"This is thy ransom, I trow, which thou hast left unpaid?"

"My ransom was to be a thousand marks," rejoined Benedetto. "Here are ten thousand. Take them, and spare my life!"

"I will take the gold, but I cannot spare thee!" rejoined the Outlaw. "Thy name is inscribed on the list of those adjudged to death for grievous wrongs done to the people! I cannot pardon thee if I would. Prepare for instant death! One of these priests will shrive thee!"

"Yet spare me, and I will take thee where more treasure will be found!" implored Benedetto.

The Outlaw hesitated for a moment, and then said, sternly, and resuming his previous inflexible look, "It may not be!"

A priest was then called, and followed the unfortunate merchant, as he was dragged away to the Standart at Cheapside, around which a hideous throng was collected.

Several persons having been previously executed there, the steps were slippery with blood.

A stalwart individual, of forbidding appearance, who acted as executioner, and carried a large two-handed sword on his shoulder, ordered the wretched man to kneel down.

The priest then clambered up to him, and, after saying a few words in a low tone, and listening to his response, gave him absolution.

After Benedetto had pressed a crucifix to his lips, the executioner struck off his head, which rolled down to the foot of the steps, and was carried off by the crowd.

END OF THE FOURTH BOOK.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

SMITHFIELD.

CHAPTER I.

A NIGHT OF TERROR.

THAT night the Outlaw made his headquarters in Leadenhall, then a large private mansion, belonging to Sir Hugh Nevill, having flat battlements, coated with lead, when it derived its name, and a large central court. This hall afterwards became the property of the renowned Richard Whittington.

In Leadenhall, after this sanguinary day's work was over, the Outlaw feasted and caroused with Hothbrand and others of his officers, laughing and jesting over the direful deeds they had done, and planning others, equally direful, for the morrow. And here he stored the vast amount of plunder he had obtained.

The large courtyard of the mansion was filled with armed men, who kept watch during the night.

Armed men were also placed in the adjoining markets; and Gracechurch and Fenchurch Streets were guarded in like manner for fear of a surprise.

But in Cheapside, where so much slaughter had taken place—for all the merchants had been beheaded at the Standard—thousands of drunken wretches were lying fast asleep, and might have been "killed like flies," as Froissart saith, had any armed men fallen upon them. But none of the loyal citizens dared to leave their houses.

Wat Tyler passed the night in a very different manner. Having resolved upon a separate course of action, he kept aloof from his brother chief.

After witnessing the destruction of the Savoy, he conducted his division of the army through the lower part of city, along Thames Street and Tower Street to Tower Hill, where he posted himself, with the design of preventing any assistance from being brought to the King, or any provisions from being introduced into the fortress.

During his march through the City he would not allow pillage. Large supplies were brought by the citizens who were favorable to the cause; and he told his men that these must suffice for the present.

A dreadful night of terror and suspense was passed by those within the beleaguered fortress—all communication with their friends and with the City being now cut off.

From their place of observation, the summit of the White Tower, the King and the Council witnessed the burning of the Savoy, and they beheld the arrival of Wat Tyler and his host on Tower Hill.

It was now clear that the fortress was to be assaulted on the morrow, and preparations were made for its defence; but it was also clear that the boldest and bravest of the Council, Sir Simon Burley and Sir Eustace de Valletort, were not hopeful, having reason to fear the garrison would capitulate.

By the King's command, Sir John Holland had been released from confinement in the Beauchamp Tower, but was not allowed to enter the palace, and was sent to keep guard on the walls.

CHAPTER II.

HOW WAT TYLER ENTERED THE TOWER.

NEXT morning, those who looked from the walls and battlements of the fortress, and from the summit of the donjon, saw the whole of Tower Hill covered with an armed multitude. Terrible to hear were the shouts of these wild-looking men.

After awhile a troop of rebels, bearing a banner of St. George, rode down as near they dared, to the Bulwark Gate, and, sounding a trumpet, called out that unless the King came out to confer with their leader, they would forthwith attack the fortress, and slay all within it.

This insolent message was repeated to Richard, and troubled him exceedingly. Summoning a meeting of the Council, he asked their advice, and Sir Simon Burley recommended that he should agree to a conference outside the Bulwark Gate, and while it took place, they would endeavor to seize the rebel leader, and conveying him into the Tower, instantly put him to death.

The plan being approved, trumpets were blown from the battlements, and notice was given to the rebels that, an hour hence, the King would sally forth, and hold a brief conference with their leader.

A loud shout from the besiegers signified their satisfaction; and, a little time before the interview, a large body of archers moved down toward the Bulwark Gate. They were headed by Wat Tyler, with a body-guard of some two hundred good men-at-arms.

Undeterred by this formidable display, Richard, fully armed and mounted on a powerful charger, came forth. He was attended by Sir Simon Burley, Sir Eustace de Valletort, Sir Osbert Montacute, the Baron de Vertain, and De Gommegines—all well mounted and completely armed. In the rear were five score archers.

On seeing the King and his attendants come forth, and noticing that the Bulwark Gate was encumbered by archers and bowmen, Wat Tyler ordered his men to charge, and dashed forward.

At the same time the company of rebels behind gave a loud shout, and pressed on after the hosemen.

Alarmed by the charge, the King instantly turned back, and though Sir Simon Burley and Sir Eustace tried to stop him, he re-entered the fortress, and they were compelled to follow.

But they were hindered by the men-at-arms, and before they could get in Wat Tyler and his men prevented the gates from being closed, the drawbridge raised, and the portcullis lowered.

So quickly and so successfully was the manoeuvre accomplished, that within a quarter of an hour after the King's retreat, more than two thousand rebels had entered the fortress, and the Tower was taken by Wat Tyler almost without a blow being struck.

The guards at the gates and the men on the battlements were driven away, and replaced by rebels.

Only the upper part of the White Tower was in the hands of the royalists, and was occupied by Sir Simon Burley, Sir Eustace de Valletort, and the knights.

In the chapel of the White Tower, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord High Treasurer had taken refuge.

But the rebel leader was content that they should remain shut up there for awhile.

In the palace were the only persons with whom he had to deal—the King, the Princess, and Editha.

CHAPTER III.

WAT TYLER'S PROPOSAL TO THE KING.

SO sudden was the entrance of the rebels into the Tower, and so numerous were they, that the garrison, either from fear, or, as was thought, from a secret understanding with the insurgents, attempted no resistance.

However, the guards stationed at the gates of the palace proved faithful, and refused to admit the rebel leader and those with him; but they were quickly slain.

Dismounting in the courtyard, Wat Tyler, attended by a dozen armed men, entered the palace, and ascertaining from an usher that the King was in the Princess' apartments, commanded the terrified official to conduct him thither.

As the rebel leader strode along the passage with a proud step, he felt that at length the object of his ambition was gained, and that supreme power was within his reach.

As may be supposed, the palace was in the utmost confusion. Grooms, pages, and yeomen had disappeared. Frightened to death, the Princess' ladies had shut themselves up in their own rooms.

The only person left with the royal lady was Editha. They were together when Richard sought his mother's apartments. The Princess' courage did not forsake her at this trying juncture, but seemed to rise with the occasion; and Editha displayed great spirit.

The King having told them that the Tower was in the hands of the rebels, and that they might expect an immediate visit from Wat Tyler, they were not surprised when the door was suddenly opened, and the rebel leader marched into the room, leaving his followers outside.

After advancing a few paces, he stopped. His stalwart figure, exaggerated by the armor he wore, his haughty mien, and the extreme sternness of his looks, combined to give him a very formidable appearance. He made no obeisance to the King or to the Princess, but waited to be addressed.

As Richard remained silent, the Princess, collecting all her energy, said to the insolent intruder:

"How dar'st thou profane this apartment with thy presence?"

"I am here by right of conquest, madame," he replied. "The Tower is in my hands, and I shall enter any room within it I think fit. I have come to make certain propositions to your son, the King; and I am much mistaken if, having regard to his safety and welfare, you do not counsel him to accede to them."

"State what thou hast to say!" cried Richard, who, by this time, had regained his self-possession.

"First, then," said the rebel leader, haughtily, "let me declare—as, indeed, must be evident—that I alone can maintain thee on the throne! I have now greater power than thine uncle, John of Gaunt, whose palace I yesterday burnt down, or than the Earls of Cambridge and Buckingham. Though I war with the nobles and the knights and with the clergy, I do not seek to dethrone thee, but will uphold thy authority on certain terms."

"State thy terms," said Richard. "I am willing to listen to them."

"That the people may confide in thee, thou shalt espouse a daughter of the people," rejoined Wat. "That I may confide in thee, thy consort shall be my daughter Editha."

Before Richard could answer, the Princess interposed. "Editha is not a daughter of the people," she rejoined, boldly. "Neither is she thy daughter!"

"She passeth as such," said Wat Tyler. "That is sufficient."

Then, turning to the King, he added: "Let me have an answer to my proposition, that I may know how to act."

"Ere you reply to this bold man, my liege," said Editha, "suffer me, I pray you, to say a word. I owe him no obedience, and will render him none! Reject his insolent proposition—reject it with scorn! Defy his utmost threats and malice. He dares not raise his hand against your royal person! Should he draw his sword, it shall pierce my breast—not yours!"

The words were uttered with so much energy that Wat recoiled, and she placed herself between him and the King.

But, in another moment, the rebel leader recovered, and exclaimed, in a furious voice:

"Think not to thwart my purpose, girl! I have planned this marriage, and it shall take place, or thou and thy great protectress will rue it, and the King will lose his crown! Who shall oppose my determination?"

"I oppose it not," rejoined Richard.

"Thou dost hear?" cried Wat, triumphantly. "The King agrees. Now wilt thou disobey?"

"I shall never marry!" said Editha.

"Never marry?" exclaimed Richard. "Not if I offer thee my hand?"

"I am wedded to heaven!" she rejoined. "Last night I pronounced the solemn vow at the altar before the Archbishop, in the presence of her Highness!"

"Tis true!" exclaimed the Princess.

Richard uttered an exclamation of despair.

"Trouble not yourself, my liege," said Wat Tyler. "She shall yet be yours. The Archbishop shall release her from the vow, or I will have his head!"

And he quitted the room, with the evident determination of executing his threat.

"I will stay him!" cried Richard, hurrying to the door. But he was prevented from going forth by the rebel guard stationed outside.

"I am a prisoner in my own palace!" exclaimed Richard, as he returned, with alarm depicted in his countenance. "The good Archbishop will be sacrificed!"

"No, my son," rejoined the Princess; "Heaven would not permit so atrocious a deed. The Archbishop is safe in the White Tower."

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY AND THE LORD HIGH TREASURER WERE BEHEADED ON TOWER HILL.

ON quitting the Princess' apartments, Wat Tyler left a guard at the door, as we have stated, giving the men strict injunctions to allow no one—not even the King—to come forth.

Taking another party with him, he began to search the palace, and ere long chanced upon one of the Archbishop's servants, who, being threatened with death, conducted the rebel leader and his men by a secret passage to the chapel in the White Tower, where they found the Archbishop and Sir Robert Hales engaged in prayer.

Mass had just been said, and both had received the Holy Communion. Not knowing what might ensue, the Archbishop had passed the whole of the previous night in devotion. He was now kneeling at the altar, praying and confessing his sins; and Sir Robert was kneeling beside him, when the rebel leader and his men rushed into the chapel.

Alarmed by the noise, the exalted personages looked around, and seeing these savage-looking men, armed with pikes and bills, at once surmised their purpose. But they did not quit their kneeling posture.

Rushing up to the Archbishop, who was arrayed in his full ecclesiastical costume, and wore his embroidered dalmatic and alb, and had a black beret on his head, Wat Tyler seized him roughly by the shoulder, and

forced him to arise. The Lord Treasurer arose at the same moment.

"What wouldst thou?" demanded the Archbishop.

"Come with me, Simon de Sudbury, and release a young damsel from the vow she made before thee last night, in the presence of the Princess," said Wat.

"I cannot absolve her if I would," said the Archbishop; "and I would not if I could."

"Then thou shalt die!" rejoined Wat Tyler.

"I well know I have no mercy to expect from thee, remorseless villain!" said the Archbishop.

"Thou art right, Simon de Sudbury!" said Wat. "Thou hast long since been doomed to death for thy treason to the people, and I would not have spared thee hadst thou not granted my request! Thou also art sentenced to die the death of a traitor!" he added, to Sir Robert Hales, who regarded him sternly. "Bring them along!" he added, to his followers.

"Ay, let us go!" said the Archbishop to the Lord Treasurer. "We are both well prepared! It is best to die when there is no longer pleasure in life!"

"I would I could have died in arms!" replied Sir Robert.

Throughout this trying scene, both maintained their customary dignified deportment; and so majestic did they look, that the rebels did not dare to lay hands upon them, as they led them from the chapel.

So expeditiously was the seizure accomplished, that Sir Simon Burley and Sir Eustace de Valletort, who were in the upper part of the donjon, were not aware of their removal.

Wat Tyler's first design was to put the Archbishop and the Lord Treasurer to death on the green in front of the chapel of St. Peter; but he changed his mind, and decided that the executions should take place on the summit of Tower Hill; since John Ball and the greater part of his followers were left there, being unable to enter the fortress.

Accordingly, he gave orders that the prisoners should be taken thither; and, mounting his steed, he rode at the head of the escort.

From the summit of the White Tower, Sir Simon Burley, Sir Eustace de Valletort, and the other knights beheld this melancholy procession. They saw the two dignified prisoners marching in the midst of the rebel guard, and a ferocious-looking ruffian, marching on foot and bearing an axe on his shoulder. But they could not rescue them, since the men-at-arms and the archers refused to act.

From the windows of the palace Richard and his mother, with Editha, likewise witnessed the dismal spectacle.

They saw the infuriated crowd that followed in the wake, armed with pikes and bills, and heard the dreadful cries of "Death to the traitors! Death to the oppressors of the people!" And they knew what was about to take place.

In this manner the procession passed through the gateway of the Garden Tower, along the lower ward, and out at the Bulwark Gate; and throughout the march, exposed as they were to all sorts of indignities and insults from the vile miscreants who attended them, the two illustrious personages maintained an unaltered deportment.

But they were yet more roughly treated as they toiled up Tower Hill; and the good Archbishop had need of all his fortitude to pass through this dreadful ordeal. As to the Lord Treasurer, his courage sustained him, and he eyed his tormentors so fiercely that they drew back.

Hitherto, no scaffold had been erected on Tower Hill, and indeed no execution had taken place on the spot, subsequently drenched with the best blood in the kingdom.

Stationed on the brow of the hill, John Ball seated on his mule, had watched the painful march of the victims, and exulted in the indignities to which they were exposed.

As they came slowly on, he rode down to meet the Archbishop, and, addressing him in a scoffing tone, said:

"Simon de Sudbury, thou art welcome to Tower Hill. At length thou wilt reap the reward of thy crimes."

"What have I done that ye desire to kill me?" demanded the Archbishop. "I have yet to learn mine offense."

"Thou hast deeply wronged the people," replied John Ball, "and they have doomed thee to death. Is it not so, my friends?" he cried, looking around at the infuriated multitude. "Shall he not die?"

"He shall die!" they replied, as with one voice.

"Thou hearest, Simon de Sudbury?" said John Ball. "Thy sentence is pronounced."

"I will not speak further to thee, apostate," said the Archbishop; "but I will address thy deluded companions. I plead not for life, but I ask what have I done?"

"Thou hast robbed us!" cried a thousand voices.

"Ye are wrong," responded the Archbishop. "I have worked for you; I have expended my money upon you. Let Canterbury speak for me. Ye know what I have done for that city. I have partly rebuilt it."

"Heed him not," cried John Ball. "He speaketh falsely."

"He shall die!" cried the great throng, inexorably.

"Hear me, mistaken men," cried the Archbishop, in a voice that awakened attention. "If you kill me, there will come upon you the indignation of the just Avenger. All England will be put under an interdict."

On this there arose a terrible cry, and as soon as the multitude were in some degree quieted, John Ball said:

"We neither fear Pope Gregory's interdict nor acknowledge his authority. Thou art a great offender, and justice hath at length overtaken thee. Prepare thyself for instant death."

"I am already prepared," replied the Archbishop, firmly. "I passed the whole of last night in prayer and confession, and when seized by thy lawless chief, I was kneeling at the altar. Mayst thou be as well prepared to meet thy end; and it not far off. I forgive thee, and may heaven forgive thee likewise."

To this the Lord Treasurer added, in a terrible voice: "I have no forgiveness for a wretch like thee, who has forsaken his religion, and incited the people to rebellion! My blood will rise to heaven to bear witness against thee I summon thee to appear at the Judgment Seat within three days."

So awful were the words, that those who heard them looked aghast.

Seeing the effect produced, Wat Tyler, who had kept back to allow John Ball to speak, pushed forward his horse, and ordered the execution to proceed.

During the colloquy previously recounted, a large block had been brought from a neighboring butcher's shop, and beside it stood the ruffianly headman, leaning on his axe and scowling at his victims.

Around was gathered a group of fierce-looking men, armed with pikes and gisarnes, and within the circle were Wat Tyler on his steed, and the monk on his mule. Near the captives were half a dozen villainous-looking

wretches, appointed to assist the executioner in his task.

First to suffer was the good Archbishop. He looked around at the circle of spectators, but met not a pitying glance.

Howling like so many wolves, they shook their weapons at him; but their fury disturbed him not.

Quietly unfastening the piece of fine linen known as the amice, suspended over his shoulders, he took it off, and next removed his alb. These were the sole preparations he made.

Then turning to the headsman, he told him he forgave him. The surly caltiff made no response, but signed to him to kneel down.

The Archbishop complied, but before laying his venerable head upon the block, he lifted up his hands to Heaven, and ejaculated:

"Oh, all ye blessed angels and saints, assist me by your prayers!"

Growing impatient at the delay, the executioner forced him down, and then struck at him with the axe; but the blow not proving fatal, the Archbishop slightly raised himself, and joyfully, and with a beautified expression of countenance, exclaimed:

"Heaven will that I should be ranked among the martyrs!"

Not till the seventh stroke was the good man's head severed from the body.

The Lord Treasurer met his fate with the utmost resolution.

Insensible, apparently, to the outcries of the spectators he looked sternly at the two leaders, and then, throwing off his velvet gown and chain, said to the headsman:

"Take those, thou clumsy varlet, and do the work quickly, if thou can'st."

Satisfied with the gifts, or ashamed of his previous awkwardness, the executioner struck off the Lord Treasurer's head with a single blow.

But the ferocious rebels were not content with these acts of vengeance. Setting the two heads on pikes, they carried them to London Bridge, and fixed them on the City Gate, where the heads of traitors were usually placed.

In order that the head of the Archbishop should be recognized, they nailed his black cap to the skull.

The bodies of the two illustrious victims were left on Tower Hill, and remained there—none daring to remove them—till the following night.

The mutilated remains of the Lord High Treasurer were interred in the Temple; and the good Archbishop, who had won a crown of martyrdom, though he failed to receive it on earth, found a fitting place of sepulture within the choir of Canterbury Cathedral.

When the tomb was accidentally opened a few years since, it was found that a leaden shot occupied the place of the head.

Once a year, in former days, the Mayor and Aldermen of Canterbury used to visit the tomb of the great benefactor of the city, and pray for his soul.

CHAPTER V.

CATHERINE DE COURCY TAKES REFUGE IN DARTFORD PRIORY.

MOUNTED on a powerful charger, and having Catherine de Courcy seated behind him, Conrad quitted Eltham secretly that night, and riding with great swiftness, reached Dartford Priory in less than an hour.

The gates were closed, and some little time elapsed before the old porter could be induced to open them; but at last he yielded to Catherine's supplications, and admitted them into the court.

Though it was now somewhat late, the Prioress, who had not yet retired to rest—being engaged in prayer—came to the door with Sister Eudoxia, and on their appearance, Conrad instantly set down his fair charge, and as the light carried by Sister Eudoxia fell upon the features of the new-comer, the Prioress uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"I thought it was Editha," she cried.

"No, 'tis I—Catherine de Courcy," replied the other; "I am come to seek refuge with you, holy mother."

"You are welcome, dear Catherine," replied the Prioress, tenderly embracing her. "My thoughts were running upon one for whose preservation I have just been praying."

With a mind greatly relieved at having thus successfully accomplished his object, Conrad departed without a word.

He returned to Eltham without drawing bridle, and entered the palace as secretly as he had quitted it.

A great weight was taken from Sir Lionel's mind when he learnt that his daughter was in safety.

After some converse with the old knight, Conrad was about to retire, when Sir Lionel stopped him.

"I have a plan to propose," he said. "If you agree, it ought to be acted upon forthwith. Are all the men in the garrison rebels?"

"I fear so," replied Conrad; "they have all joined the league."

"Dare you propose to them to return to their allegiance?"

"I will sound some of them to-night, and if I find them favorably disposed, I will muster the whole garrison to-morrow, and march them to London."

Conrad's overtures were so well received by the men he addressed, that he was encouraged to carry out his design.

Next day, at an early hour, he summoned the whole garrison to the courtyard.

Fully armed, and mounted on his charger, and having Sir Lionel beside him, likewise on horseback, he made the men a lengthened address, in which he pointed out to them the certainty of their ultimate destruction if they continued in rebellion, promising them not only pardon but reward, if they returned to their duty, and proceeded to the King's assistance.

Addressed to willing ears, his arguments prevailed; the promise of pardon and reward being doubtless the main inducement.

Raising a loud shout for the King, and brandishing their weapons, they promised to follow wherever Conrad should lead them.

"Then we will march to London at once!" cried Conrad, determined not to let their newly-aroused loyalty cool. "Follow me!"

"Help to put down the King's enemies, and your misdeeds will be forgotten and forgiven!" cried Sir Lionel.

Once more the echoes of the palace were awakened by loyal shouts, as the late rebels followed Conrad and the old knight across the drawbridge.

Thus was the royal palace, for a time, completely abandoned. But better so than occupied as it had been.

As they rode along the avenue, Sir Lionel heartily congratulated Conrad on his success.

"I am not surprised at it," said the other. "The men are beginning to get frightened, and are glad to purchase their pardon."

On arriving at Blackheath, at the old knight's suggestion, Conrad called a halt, and addressing the men, said: "It behooves us to act with the utmost caution. When we enter London, we must make it appear that we still belong to the rebel party. By such means we shall not be attacked, and shall be better able to render assistance to the King. We will declare ourselves at the fitting moment. Await the signal from me."

Promising attention to the order, the men continued the march.

As they approached Southwark, the numerous desolated and half-burnt mansions showed them the havoc committed by their former comrades; and so sad was the spectacle that it excited feelings of compassion even in their rugged breasts.

Before crossing London Bridge, Conrad again halted to make inquiries, and the information obtained determined him to proceed at once to Tower Hill.

Ere this, the heads of the Archbishop and the Lord High Treasurer had been fixed on the city gate, and the sight so enraged Conrad and Sir Lionel, that, unable to control themselves, they dispersed the crowd who were gazing at the relics.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE OUTLAW WAS SLAIN BY CONRAD BASSET; AND HOW CONRAD WAS KNIGHTED BY THE KING.

NEVER was London the scene of so many strange and terrible events as at the period of our tale.

While two of England's wisest and best sons were butchered on Tower Hill, an effort, that proved successful, was made by the royal party to drive out the rebels left within the fortress, when Wat Tyler quitted it to witness the executions.

Owing to the reasonable apathy of the archers and men-at-arms constituting the garrison, Sir Simon Burley, Sir Eustace de Valletort, and all the knights and esquires, had been unable to prevent the entrance of Wat Tyler into the fortress, and were compelled to remain in the upper part of the donjon until the rebel leader had taken his victims to Tower Hill.

They then ventured forth, and making their way to the stables without being discovered, mounted their steeds. While they were collecting all the men-at-arms they could, they were joined by the King, who was so transported with fury that he insisted on leading the attack on the rebels; and, springing on his steed, and snatching a lance from an esquire, he dashed forth, calling upon the others to follow him, and charged the rebels who were left in the upper ward.

Taken completely by surprise, and unable to resist the attack, they fled, and numbers were ridden down, and slain by the knights; but the majority ran swiftly along the lower ward, and escaped by the gates.

Excited by the pursuit, and burning to avenge himself of the insults he had received from Wat Tyler, Richard imprudently followed them, despite of entreaty, beyond the Bulwark Gate.

In vain his followers called to him to stop; he rushed madly on for more than two hundred yards, and only drew up when he perceived a very formidable-looking personage, mounted on a black steed, dashing towards him at a headlong pace, sword in hand, with the evident design of capturing or slaying him.

Then he stopped, but it was too late. Ere he could turn and fly, the fierce-looking horseman, who had descried him at a distance, was upon him.

The terrible assailant with whom the young King had to deal, though he knew him not, was the Outlaw.

Not many minutes previously the redoubted rebel leader had appeared, with a certain portion of his followers, on Tower Hill, and perceiving that a great number of insurgents were flying from the fortress, he galloped down towards Bulwark Gate, to ascertain the cause.

Long before he got there, the King appeared, and the chance of capturing the young monarch, whom he instantly recognized, made him quicken his pace.

Dashing up to Richard, and seizing his bridle, he called out, in a loud, threatening voice:

"Yield thee as my prisoner!"

"Away, villain!" cried Richard, authoritatively.

"Know'st thou not I am the King?"

To his surprise, however, his assailant did not relinquish his hold, but replied, in an insolent tone:

"I know it! Nevertheless, thou art my prisoner!"

But assistance was at hand.

Just at the very nick of time, Conrad Basset appeared.

A few minutes previously, he had entered Tower Hill, and was riding along at the head of his men with Sir Lionel by his side, when he perceived the King's danger.

Drawing his sword, he dashed forward, and called out:

"Release his Majesty instantly, villain, or —"

"What meanest thou, Conrad?" cried the Outlaw, without releasing his hold.

"Defend thyself, villain!" rejoined Conrad.

"Thou art a false traitor, Conrad!" cried the Outlaw.

"'Tis thou who art the traitor!" rejoined the traitor.

"I am the avenger!"

A brief, but terrible, conflict then ensued, regarded with fearful interest by the King—regarded, also, with fearful interest by hundreds of other spectators; but it resulted in the death of the Outlaw, whose throat being pierced by Conrad's sword, fell backwards from his steed, exclaiming, with his latest breath: "Curses on thee, traitor! Thou hast robbed me of the crown!"

Meanwhile, Sir Lionel de Courcy had joined the King, and in consequence of the explanation he was able to give his Majesty, Sir Simon Burley and the others, Conrad was invited to enter the fortress, and bring the whole of his men with him.

Richard then drew his sword, and in the presence of all his nobles dubbed his deliverer knight.

CHAPTER VII.

THE KING AGREES TO HOLD A FINAL CONFERENCE WITH WAT TYLER AT SMITHFIELD.

FROM the brow of Tower Hill Wat Tyler witnessed the deliverance of the King, and the subsequent death of the Outlaw by the hand of Conrad Basset.

Though astounded and enraged that Conrad had gone over to the royal party, Wat Tyler almost forgave him for his desertion, since he had freed him from the only person able to compete with him for sovereign power.

From John Ball he dreaded no opposition; but he had felt that a deadly quarrel must speedily arise between himself and the Outlaw. This difficulty was now removed.

Feigning, however, deep regret at the death of his brother chief, and vowing dire revenge, he caused the body to be conveyed to Leadenhall, and shortly afterwards followed it thither, to take possession of the Outlaw's treasure.

Before his departure, he left a very large body of men—numbering nearly thirty thousand—on Tower Hill, un-

der the command of Hothbrand, to prevent any supplies from being received by the besieged, and also to check any attempt on their part to sally forth.

John Ball accompanied him to Leadenhall, where they had a long consultation together as to the next step to be taken.

As Wat Tyler now despaired of carrying out his ambitious project in regard to Editha, he resolved to seize upon the young King, since he could then pass such measures as he pleased in the name of his royal visitor.

To besiege the Tower, now that the garrison was increased by the men brought from Eltham, would be a work of time. To enter the fortress by stratagem would be difficult.

By the advice of John Ball, he ordered Hothbrand to make a proclamation, inviting Richard to meet him on the following day at Smithfield, when they could hold a conference, and the King could hear the demands of the Commons. A solemn pledge on the part of Wat Tyler was likewise to be given that no harm would be done to the King or his attendants; but this promise was not meant to be kept, Wat Tyler's real intention being to seize upon the young monarch and slay his attendants.

Notice of the proclamation was brought to the King, who had with him at the time Sir Simon Burley, Sir Eustace de Valletort, Sir John de Newtown, Sir Lionel de Courcy, and the young members of the Council at once decided that his Majesty ought not to attend the proposed conference.

"'Tis a stratagem on the part of this daring rebel to get you into his power, my liege," said Sir Simon. "If you quit the Tower, you will never return."

"But I shall be guarded by the Lord Mayor, Sir John Philpot, and all the valiant and loyal citizens," replied Richard. "Moreover, I can count upon Sir Robert Knolles, Sir Perducas d'Albreth, and their companies."

"That Wat Tyler meditates some treachery I nothing doubt, my liege," observed Sir Conrad Basset; "but he shall never accomplish his design. Your Majesty may attend the conference without fear. I will slay him, as I slew his brother chief. With his death the rebellion will be ended, since no one can take his place."

"Sir Conrad is right," said Sir Lionel. "Your Majesty will be in no danger, and the opportunity of getting rid of this powerful rebel ought not to be neglected."

"The plan promises well, but the risk is too great," observed Sir Eustace.

"The risk will be mine," said Sir Conrad; "but I will gladly sacrifice my life if I can deliver his Majesty from this thralldom, and enable him to recover the sovereignty of the realm, which he hath well-nigh lost."

"You will not deliver me alone," said Richard, "but thousands of my loyal subjects, whose lives and property are menaced by this villain and his robber host. My lords, I will attend the conference at Smithfield."

No further opposition was offered by the two members of the Council; for though they had not changed their opinion as to the extreme hazard of the plan, they hoped for success.

Accordingly, a trumpet was sounded, and proclamation was made that at noon on the following day the King would proceed to Smithfield to hold a conference with the insurgent leader, and would be prepared, when in full possession of the grievances of the people, to assent to all the just demand of the Commons.

When this answer was brought to Wat Tyler and the monk, who were feasting at Leadenhall, the latter exclaimed: "'Tis well! We shall take him as easily as a fowler snareth a bird!"

CHAPTER VIII.

WAT TYLER IS AGAIN WARNED BY FATHER GAWEN.

NEXT morning, preparations were made for that meeting, on the issue of which depended the continuance of the monarchy of England. The nobles and clergy were already doomed to extermination by the rebels. Whether the young King would share their fate, a few hours would decide. Wat Tyler firmly believed if the throne became vacant, he was destined to mount it.

The royalists were under a like impression. In their opinion, the decisive moment of the conflict between the Nobles and the Commons had arrived. Either they must crush the rebel leader, or he would crush them. Wat Tyler must never leave the place of meeting alive. Such was their firm resolve.

Strange to say, the rebel leader had such reliance on fortune, that he felt sure he should come away unharmed and triumphant.

Clad in a complete suit of chain mail, over which he wore a surcoat embroidered with the royal badge, and mounted on a superbly-trapped charger, Richard, escorted by Sir Simon Burley, Sir Eustace de Valletort, Sir Conrad Basset, De Gommegines, De Vertain, and other knights and barons, quitted the Tower, uncertain whether he should ever return to it.

Among those with the King was his brother, Sir John Holland, but the haughty young noble kept aloof from the others, and rode with Sir Osbert Montacute.

The band of former rebels brought from Eltham, whose fidelity could now be relied upon, were left in charge of the Tower, under the command of the Lieutenant and Sir Lionel de Courcy.

The battlements and towers were covered with archers and cross-bowmen, and the gates were instantly closed as soon as the royal party had passed.

All the rebels, however, had by this time quitted Tower Hill for Smithfield.

Smithfield, at the period of our history, was a large plain at the back of the Tower, overlooked by the eastern walls of the City. It was approached from Aldgate and by a postern gate from Tower Hill.

On this broad and level field, admirably adapted for the purpose, tilts and tournaments on a magnificent scale were frequently held, and judicial combats and duels decided.

Here, in 1374, splendid jousts were exhibited for seven days by Edward III., in honor of his favorite, the beautiful Alice Perrers, who was conducted thither by the infatuated monarch in a gorgeous car, followed by a train of knights and damsels mounted on chargers and palfreys.

Such displays were now past, and Smithfield, instead of being the scene of knightly encounters and royal magnificence, was covered by thousands of insurgents, whose intention was to plunder all the wealthy burgesses, and then setting fire to the City in four places, burn it down.

From St. Botolph's to the Minorities Cross, near which stood a convent of poor nuns of the order of St. Clare, and extending thence to the eastern verge of the plain, was drawn up the entire insurgent force, numbering, as we have more than once explained, nearly a hundred thousand men. The foremost ranks were occupied by archers and cross-bowmen, the rest of the host being armed with pikes, pole-axes, bills, glaives, glavelots, and gisarnes.

None were mounted except Wat Tyler, Hothbrand,

and John Ball—the two former on chargers, the latter on his mule.

Wat Tyler wore a coiffe de mailles, with a bunch of horsehair depending from it, a gorget and breast-plate, and was armed with a dagger, and a short, broad-bladed sword.

John Ball was habited in his grey monastic garb, and his hood being thrown back, fully displayed his countenance, which had an almost demoniacal expression.

Wat Tyler was riding slowly past the front line, thinking that such a host must prove invincible, when he perceived a friar approaching, accompanied by a woman.

Instantly recognizing Father Gawen and his wife, he was about to order them away; but an impulse he could not control, induced him to receive them.

"What wouldst thou with me?" he said, in a stern tone, to the hermit, as they came up.

"I am come once more to warn thee—and for the last time!" replied the friar.

"I despise thy warnings," said Wat Tyler. "Thou art a false prophet—a dreamer of idle dreams! Seest thou not I am lord and master of this great city? Even now the King is coming unto me to make terms!"

"Thou thinkest to catch him in thy toils," rejoined the hermit; "but thou thyself shalt be snared and taken!"

"Hast thou heard aught?" demanded Wat Tyler, regarding him fixedly.

"What I have heard has been declared to me—but not by man!" rejoined the hermit, solemnly. "Depart at once, or thou wilt surely perish!"

"Now I know thee, treacherous friar!" cried Wat. "Thou art hired to come hither with this lying tale! Thou wouldst save the King!"

"I would save thee, unbeliever!" rejoined the hermit, angrily. "But perish in thy pride!"

"Time was when you wouldst listen to me, Wat!" cried his wife. "Turn not a deaf ear now! Seek safety in instant flight!"

"Begone, woman! I know thee not!" cried Wat. "Hark! yonder is the King! Begone! or both of you shall be driven hence!"

"Farewell forever, barbarous man!" cried his dame. "Thou deservest thy fate!"

And she departed with the hermit.

But when she got to St. Botolph's Church, she stopped, and would have tarried there to witness the approaching interview, had not the hermit forced her away, saying, "The sight is not fit for thee, woman!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE FATE OF THE REBEL LEADER.

At the postern-gate, leading from Tower Hill to Smithfield, Richard found the Lord Mayor and Sir John Philpot waiting for him, with six score men-at-arms.

Both were armed from head to heel—the former in plate armor, the latter in chain mail. Sir William Walworth had a mace at his saddle-bow, and a long dagger in his girdle. Sir John Philpot had sword, shield and battle-axe.

"Are these all the men-at-arms you can muster, Sir William?" inquired the King, looking at him reproachfully.

"My liege," replied the Lord Mayor, "all the loyal citizens have got their friends and servants shut up with them in their houses; but they are prepared to sally forth instantly, and hasten to Smithfield, should the alarm be given. Sir Robert Knolles and Sir Perducas d'Albreth will each bring six score good companions. In this way, I doubt not, we shall be able to muster some five or six thousand valiant men."

"That will suffice," replied Richard, evidently much gratified.

He then told the Lord Mayor and Sir John Philpot the plan formed to put the rebel leader to death.

"I am glad your Majesty has mentioned the design to me," observed the Lord Mayor. "I will send messengers instantly to Sir Robert Knolles and Sir Perducas, and all the principal citizens, to come forth at once with their men, and wait on Tower Hill, so that they can enter by the postern when they hear the alarm."

On entering Smithfield, Richard and his attendants were astounded at the sight of the immense host drawn up on the other side of the plain.

Presently the royal party came to a halt, and the King, having previously arranged his plans, moved forward to a short distance, attended only by Sir John de Newtoun, whom he sent to intimate to the rebel leader that he was ready to confer with him.

Having delivered the message, Sir John rode back, but it soon became evident, by the slowness of his proceedings, that the insolent rebel was resolved to make the King wait. Sir John, therefore, went again to him, and, in an authoritative tone, bade him make haste.

"When I am at leisure, I will come to the King," he repeated. "And thou troublest me, I will not come at all."

Afraid of defeating the plan, if he offended him, Sir John again retired.

After another delay, the daring rebel rode slowly forward, and planted himself haughtily in front of the King.

"Why dost thou not make an obeisance to his Majesty, presumptuous varlet?" cried Sir John, highly incensed. "I will not parley with the King at all while thou art near," said Wat.

"Leave us," rejoined Richard, making a covert sign to him.

Thereupon the knight withdrew, but, with the Lord Mayor and Sir Conrad Basset kept a watchful eye upon the rebel leader.

"Now let me hear thy demands, without more ado," said Richard, scarcely able to tolerate the rebel leader's insolence, and eager to put an end to the scene.

"These are the demands which I make in the name of the Commons, of whom I am the chief," replied Wat Tyler, pausing between each proposition: "Entire exemption from slavery and serfdom. Partition of lands among the peasantry. Utter abolishment of nobles and clergy." Richard could not repress a slight exclamation, but Wat Tyler went on: "Destruction of imposts. Free right of chase to all."

"Much thou dost ask may be granted," said Richard. "But I must consult with my Council."

"Thy decision must be made at once!" rejoined Wat Tyler. "It must be yea or nay! I will never lay down arms till all existing laws are abolished, and all legislators placed at my disposal. Hear me, O King!" he added, with extraordinary arrogance. "There shall be no other laws in England than those that proceed from my mouth!"

Richard regarded him with astonishment, marveling at his pride, but he made no remark.

After a pause, Wat Tyler added, "I have a proposal to make to thee, O King! 'Tis this. Let us divide the realm between us. Less than half will not satisfy my ambition."

How sayst thou? Dost thou assent? 'Tis a liberal offer methinks, from one who can take all!"

"And thou dost deem thou canst take all?" observed Richard, in a skeptical tone.

"I am sure of it!" replied Wat Tyler, drawing his sword, and playing with it.

He had resolved to kill the King, but was so much awed by Richard's majestic demeanor, that he hesitated to strike the fatal blow.

The hesitation saved Richard, and allowed him to make a sign to the Lord Mayor, who was nearest to him.

Remarking the gesture, Sir William Walworth immediately rode up, keeping his hand upon his dagger, ready to strike.

"Ha!" cried Wat Tyler, fiercely: "why dost thou break upon our conference? Thou wert not summoned."

"It is not fit thou shouldst be alone with the King, thou treacherous villain!" cried the Lord Mayor, indignantly. "Had I his Majesty's commands, I would slay thee."

"Tis ye who harbor traitors!" exclaimed Wat. "Ye have one with ye now, who has broken his oath to the league, and repaid my favors to him with the basest ingratitude. Let him come forward and speak with me."

Glad of the opportunity of summoning him, the Lord Mayor called to Sir Conrad, who immediately rode forward and confronted his former leader.

"Ha, traitor! ha, villain!" exclaimed Wat, furiously. "Darest thou look me in the face, after thy perfidy and deceitfulness? Deliver up thy sword to me, base ingrate! By St. Dunstan, I will never eat till I have thy head!"

Carried away by passion, he dashed suddenly forward, and would have struck Sir Conrad with his sword, if the Lord Mayor had not dealt the infuriated wretch a terrible blow with his dagger just below the gorget.

Though mortally wounded by the stroke Wat Tyler turned and tried to regain his followers; but he was quickly overtaken by Sir Conrad, who dragged him from his horse and instantly dispatched him.

At this spectacle, Hothbrand called out in a loud voice: "Comrades, see ye not they have treacherously slain our leader?"

Upon this, tremendous cries of "Vengeance!" arose from the insurgent ranks; and the archers nocked their shafts, and prepared to shoot the King and his attendants.

But at that moment of extreme peril, when his life was in jeopardy and his kingdom trembled in the balance, Richard displayed a courage worthy of his valiant sire.

Without a moment's hesitation, he rode fearlessly towards the rebels, and with a look of majesty that impressed all who beheld him, he called out, in a loud, clear voice:

"What would you do, my friends? Would you spill the blood of your King because you have lost your leader? Lament not the death of a traitor and a rebel. I will be your leader. Follow me, and you shall have whatsoever you require."

Such was the effect of this address, delivered with wonderful spirit, that the archers and cross-bowmen forbore to shoot, and the men consulted each other by glances.

Seeing that they wavered, and feeling that all was lost unless he made an instantaneous effort, John Ball rode forward on his mule, and with the looks and gestures of a demoniac, called out:

"Listen not to him! He will beguile you with enticing words and false promises to your destruction. He is now in your power. Slay him, and avenge your fallen leader!"

Further speech was not allowed him. His skull was cleft in twain by Sir John Philpot, who dashed up at the instant, and the prostrate monk fell to the ground from the mule.

Enraged by the fall of their second leader, the men once more called out, "Vengeance!" and exclaiming, "Let us kill them all!" again bent their bows, when loud shouts at the other side of the field announced that assistance was at hand.

While the King was courageously addressing the rebels, Sir Simon Burley and Sir Eustace Valletort galloped off to summon assistance.

In another instant Sir Robert Knolles and Perducas d'Albreth rode through the postern gate, each at the head of six score archers.

They were immediately followed by a corps of two thousand well-armed and well-mounted citizens, who shouted lustily as they came upon the field; and it was this shout that struck terror into the rebels.

Demoralized by the death of Wat Tyler, who alone could lead them, the insurgents offered no determined resistance, and when they were charged by the redoubtable knights and their hardy companions, who smote them with their spears, and trampled them beneath their horses' feet, slaying many hundreds, they threw down their arms and fled.

Hothbrand was killed in the first charge.

Next came the armed citizens, burning for vengeance. They completed the rout of the rebels, driving them into the open fields, and chasing them in every direction like wild beasts.

Multitudes were put to the sword, no quarter being given, no prisoners made.

So rapidly, and so effectively, was the work done, that in less than two hours after the death of the rebel leader the insurrection he had kindled, and which threatened with extermination all the nobles and gentlemen of England, was at an end.

Sought for amid the heaps of slain in Smithfield, the bodies of Wat Tyler and John Ball were recovered and conveyed to the Hospital of St. Bartholomew.

Subsequently, their heads were cut off, and replaced those of the martyred Simon de Sudbury, and the Lord Treasurer on the spikes of London Bridge.

CHAPTER X.

AN EARLY GRAVE.

AFTER the rout of the rebels, Richard proceeded to St. Paul's, to offer up thanks to heaven for the great deliverance given him.

Accompanied by the Council, the Lord Mayor, Sir John Philpot, Sir John de Newtoun, Sir Conrad Basset, and others, he rode slowly along Aldgate, Cornhill, and Cheap-side, everywhere receiving the most enthusiastic demonstrations of loyalty and devotion from the citizens.

But, though joyous shouts rent the air, the aspect of the city was very melancholy. Houses, halls, and monasteries burnt and demolished met the eye at every turn. Many of the small streets were encumbered with ruins, or filled with goods that could not be carried off.

London, indeed, looked like a city which had been sacked during a siege. The enemy had been driven off, but the frightful havoc committed could be discerned on all sides.

It was impossible at that moment to estimate the damage done. But no one doubted it must be enormous.

But there were other sights even more painful than houses burnt and destroyed. Headless trunks were lying unburied in the streets, and great numbers of priests, monks, and nuns were wandering about without shelter.

Profoundly touched by the sight, Richard spoke to the Lord Mayor, who promised that places of refuge should immediately be found for these unfortunate persons.

After hearing mass in St. Paul's, which was thronged with the citizens, Richard proceeded to the Tower.

As soon as he had dismounted, he repaired to his mother's apartments, and took with him Sir Eustace de Valletort. He found her alone with Editha.

Ever since his departure they had been praying for him.

From his joyful looks, the Princess knew he had been successful, and flying towards him, she clasped him to her breast, exclaiming,—

"Ah, fair son! how much I have endured on your account! I should have died! But my anxiety is all over, now that I behold you again, in safety, and triumphant over your enemies!"

"Heaven has answered your prayers, madam!" replied Richard, raising his eyes upwards. "My kingdom is saved. The rebels are completely discomfited, and their leaders slain!"

For a few moments there was a deep silence, during which the Princess and Editha breathed an earnest prayer.

"You say that all the leaders are slain, my son?" inquired the Princess.

"All madam," he replied; "I am completely delivered from my enemies."

"May your reign never again be disturbed by tumults and rebellions, sire!" exclaimed Editha, fervently.

"Tis too much to hope and expect," cried the Princess; "but may all plots and dangerous designs be defeated!"

"Madam," said Editha, with a look of sadness, "I will now ask your gracious permission to retire to Dartford Priory."

"Nay; you are too young to retire to a convent," interrupted the King.

"I shall be happier there, my liege," she replied, with a melancholy smile.

"But you have seen nothing but danger and strife," cried Richard. "You know nothing of the pleasures and amusements of a Court. At present you are depressed. When you have recovered your spirit, you will think differently."

She shook her head gently, but made no reply.

"Remain, I entreat you, till these terrible events are effaced from your memory!" he cried, almost in an imploring tone. "Then, if you wish, you shall depart."

"My liege," she said firmly, but sadly, "my resolution is taken. I have done with the world."

Richard looked at her earnestly—entreatingly—but seeing no change in her countenance, he said to the Princess:

"Use your influence with her, I pray you, madam!"

"Tis best she should go," rejoined the Princess.

Richard uttered an exclamation of despair.

"Do you not approve of my decision?" said the Princess, in a low tone, to Sir Eustace de Valletort, who had been a deeply interested observer of the scene.

"Entirely, madam," he replied.

"I have need of repose after this terrible turmoil," said the Princess; "and shall remain for some time in seclusion. The Tower awakens too many painful memories. Order the barge, I pray you, to be prepared at once, to conduct us to Dartford Priory."

"It may be proper to inform your Highness," said the knight, "that Sir Lionel de Courcy and Sir Conrad Basset are about to set out for Dartford Priory, where the Lady Catherine de Courcy has taken refuge."

"Say you so?" cried the Princess. "Then bid them attend me in the barge. I shall be glad of their escort."

Sir Eustace bowed, and departed on his errand.

For the last few minutes, Richard had looked like one stupefied. Turning sharply around, he said:

"Will you leave me, Editha?"

"She is going with me, my son," replied the Princess.

"Do not oppose her departure."

And, taking a hand, cold as marble, she drew the poor damsel from the room.

One look back at the King—the last.

She never beheld him more.

In less than a month afterwards, she was lying in the secluded graveyard of the Priory.

Sister Eudoxia and the Prioress prayed daily beside that early grave.

Almost simultaneously with the sad event just recorded, the marriage took place, at Canterbury Cathedral, of Conrad Basset and the lovely Catherine de Courcy.

The valiant young knight subsequently arose high in the King's favor, and Catherine became the fairest ornament of the Court of Anne of Bohemia.

[THE END.]

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